The Vedic Way of Knowing God

By

Sri Dharma Pravartaka Acharya
(Dr. Frank Morales, Ph.D.)

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Foreword by
Dr. David Frawley

Preface by
Professor Klaus K. Klostermaier

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"The Word, verily, is greater than name. The Word, in fact, makes known the *Ṛg Veda*, the *Yajur Veda*, the *Sāma Veda*, the *Atharva Veda* as the fourth, and the ancient lore as the fifth: the *Veda* of *Vedas*, the ritual for ancestors, calculus, the augural sciences, the knowledge of the signs of the times, ethics, political science, sacred knowledge, theology, knowledge of the spirits, military science, astrology, the science of snakes and of celestial beings. The Word also makes known heaven, earth, wind, space, the waters, fire, the Gods, men, animals, birds, grass and trees, all animals down to worms, insects and ants. It also makes known what is right and wrong, truth and untruth, good and evil, what is pleasing and what is unpleasing. Verily, if there were no Word, there would be knowledge neither of right and wrong, nor of truth and untruth, nor of the pleasing and unpleasing. The Word makes all this known. Meditate on the Word."

Sāma Veda, *Candogya Upaniṣad* 7.2.1.

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Dedication

"The Vedic Way of Knowing God"

is dedicated to my son,

Michael Prahlad Morales

Acknowledgments

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January, 2010

Foreword

By Dr. David Frawley
(Sri Vamadeva Shastri)

The Vedic tradition is primarily one of knowledge, going back to the four *Vedas* as books of knowledge, the term *Veda* deriving from the root *'vid'*, meaning to see, to know, to directly experience, or to realize within one's own awareness. The Vedic tradition is further defined as Sanatana Dharma or a universal and eternal (Sanatana) tradition of truth and natural law (Dharma). What *Veda* is seeking to know is the nature of things, ultimately the nature of our own being that is connected to the Divine presence or higher consciousness which pervades all existence.

As such, the Vedic tradition is not content merely with belief in God or even communion with the deity as its ultimate aim. Its goal is to know the deity within our own minds and hearts in the sense of this higher knowledge born of direct perception, not as a mere mental or emotional connection, but one that engages our entire being to its immortal core.

Such inner knowing is not a speculative venture or a matter of salvation through faith. Vedic Dharma teaches specific philosophies or ways of knowledge about the deity. For these to really work, specific *sadhanas* or spiritual practices, largely yogic in nature are required. Vedic Dharma does not rest upon faith at a mass level, but spiritual practices at an individual level for achieving the ultimate goal of life described as *moksha*, or liberation from the cycle of birth and death.

Other religious, spiritual and philosophical systems in the world also have their concerns with and their means of gaining such inner knowledge of the deity, often put under the banner of the 'religious experience' or the 'mystical experience'. Such experiences are also commonly referred to as 'unity consciousness', though they have considerable varieties.

The pursuit of mystical experiences has been a sidelight or rarity in western religious traditions, and has sometimes been suppressed by them, particularly when it challenges the authority of existing institutions. Yet it has been widely encouraged in India since the most ancient times. Each follower of a particular spiritual path in India is usually encouraged to take up such a *sadhana* to contact the deity

within. At the same time, since there are clearly defined paths to higher realization in the Vedic tradition, there is less danger of the practitioner falling into the confusion that mystical experiences can sometimes create for those who stumble upon them, rather than are trained to receive them.

Sri Dharma Pravartaka Acharya (Dr. Frank Morales) is a rare western teacher who knows both the philosophies and the practices of the Vedic tradition and has firsthand experience of how they really work. He is a highly qualified teacher, or Acharya, of Vedic Dharma, the first western Acharya of a western Hindu temple, not merely an academic looking at Vedic thought with little practical experience of how it is applied. He has also studied in depth other religious, spiritual and philosophical traditions. This provides him a much deeper level of insight into the Vedic tradition than normally found in the vast majority of teachers today. He takes the discussion out of the mere speculative realm to the domain of spiritual practice, making his discussion relevant to those involved in meditation and devotional disciplines as well.

Sri Dharma Pravartaka Acharya focuses on the issue of *pramanas* or proofs, the complex yet central issue of epis-

temology. If we want to know something, the first question that arises is: “What are our available means of legitimate knowledge?” The issue is particularly important relative to spiritual studies. If something Divine, infinite and eternal does exist, through what special means can it be known? Obviously, our ordinary mind and senses are designed to know limited, finished and transient objects, though they can speculate about something beyond. Is there some other more direct means that we can develop in order to do this?

In western philosophy the means of knowledge are largely limited to reason and the senses, and what can be extrapolated from them, though theologies regularly bring in faith and scripture as well. The Vedic tradition has also accepted *samadhi,* or yogic perception born of the meditative mind, as a legitimate means of knowledge. This not only includes the mystical experience, but allows a practical and scientific approach to it through yogic disciplines.

The Vedic tradition includes the idea of scripture, or *shruti*, not as books to merely believe in, but as indicators and guidelines to a higher realization that should be employed in the context of *sadhana,* or spiritual practice. The Vedic *shruti* is linked to the idea of *shabda,* or sacred sound, and

mantra, reflecting the Divine Word and cosmic creative vibration. Sri Dharma Pravartaka Acharya examines the issue of scripture and sacred sound quite clearly from a Vedic perspective.

Most modern Vedantic studies have focused on the Advaita Vedanta of Shankaracharya and his modern proponents since the time Swami Vivekananda over a century ago. Recently, the Dvaitic and Vishishtadvaitic forms of Vedanta have also received attention, which adds another dimension to these studies. Sri Dharma Pravartaka Acharya has taken a view that can embrace and honor all these systems, without losing their specific value and different approaches.

For this examination, he has focused on one primary thinker, the work of Jiva Goswami, an important figure in the Vaishnava tradition about whom much has been written in recent years with the development of the Bhakti Yoga movement throughout the world. Yet he grounds his study of Goswami in a greater analysis of all six Vedic philosophies as well as their connections with other philosophical and theological traditions East and West. This affords the book a relevance beyond India to the global issues of spiritual knowledge.

Goswami's work, like that of many Vaishnava Hindus, in turn is based on the *Bhagavata Purana*, which is regarded by many Hindu scholars as the greatest of the *Puranas*, as well as an important extension of the thought and insight of the *Vedas*, *Upanishads* and *Bhagavad Gita*. Western scholarship has often ignored such texts, focusing on the prime *Sutras* and texts of the six systems of Vedic philosophy, as if there was nothing more to be considered. This has limited their scope and vision in understanding Vedic philosophy, a situation that the author seeks to correct.

The book reflects an academic rigor in orientation, approach and expression. It demands profound thought on the part of its reader. Yet the book also represents a new type of experiential scholarship from westerners trained in authentic Eastern traditions. This provides a different view than what is normally found from academics looking at Eastern traditions from the outside.

Such 'inside the tradition' views provide a good alternative and help us frame the focus of a new debate, which is not simply about different philosophies or theologies, but about the ultimate truth of our own existence and what our true

nature as conscious beings really resides in. With *The Vedic Way of Knowing God*, and his own personal spiritual example, Sri Dharma Pravartaka Acharya leads us forward in this new adventure in consciousness.

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January, 2010

Preface

By Dr. Klaus K. Klostermaier

The Vedic Way of Knowing God is obviously a work that has grown over many years. While focused on Jiva Goswami's epistemology, it is much more than a conventional scholarly study of a particular Indian theologian. It shows wide erudition and personal engagement, it is a critical study as well as a statement of faith. Embedding Jiva Goswami's writings in the entire range of Hindu sacred literature the work shows at one and the same time Jiva's connectedness with the *sanatana dharma* and his originality as a critic of some of this tradition's more extreme representatives.

Sri Dharma Pravartaka Acharya (Dr. Frank Morales) is aware of the problems that Jiva's writings present, his apparent contradictions and the unresolved questions concerning the meaning of the *Veda*. Better than anyone before him, he discloses Jiva's uncertainties and non-sequiturs. But he also shows how one can at one and the same time avoid Jiva's obvious sectarian biases and appreciate his genuine contribution to the hermeneutics of the Vedic corpus, based on a Puranic tradition.

While focusing on Jiva's epistemology the Acharya provides a summary not only of Hindu, but also of Buddhist philosophy and defines Jiva's place within the Indian tradition. Since *sabda*, "the divine word" plays such a decisive role in Jiva's system the Acharya's observations on its nature and importance, are both profound and timely. They are certainly relevant also for other theological traditions.

One of the aims of this book is to get European and American philosophers interested in India's rich philosophical tradition. By showing his familiarity with Western philosophy, Sri Dharma Pravartaka Acharya acts as a bridge-builder between East and West. He also insists on the importance of "doing philosophy", i.e. showing the actual relevance of what is being discussed. The wide range of knowledge of Eastern as well as Western philosophy displayed in the book should make it attractive even to those who so far have not been exposed to Indian thought. The author's personal engagement constitutes by and in itself a philosophical undertaking of considerable weight.

I hope and wish that this book would find many readers to continue the debate it initiates.

May the *The Vedic Way of Knowing God* be heard and followed by seekers in East and West!

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January, 2010

Introduction

The foundation of every individual religion and philosophical system on earth is the claim that only that one religion or philosophy possesses the truth...that it alone has the authority to proclaim what is true and what is not. The question of what constitutes the proper derivation of religious authority is one of the most important – and one of the most contentious - issues in the realm of religious and philosophical debate. To greater or lesser extents (though mostly greater), every religious sect, spiritual tradition, denomination, school of philosophy, and spiritual leader makes the claim of having access to the truth. Indeed, for most religious and philosophical systems, both religious and secular, it is claimed, either overtly or else by obvious implication, that theirs is the only direct and sure means for knowing truth. Whether we speak of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Marxism, Science, Atheism, or any system of thought on earth, every philosophical system claims that they, and only they, are in a position of bestowing truth. "Only we have access to the real Truth", every religious teacher claims. As a direct result of such truth-claims, coupled with the natural variance of such claims that results from multiple individuals claim-

ing to know truth, we have witnessed several millennia of religious and philosophical contention.

While every philosophy can attempt to claim that theirs is the only path to truth, however, before we can even approach what religions claim and begin the process of philosophical assessment of these claims, first we need to answer the fundamental question of how any religion can even claim to know the truth at all. For those religions that claim to be revealing the nature of the Absolute, how is it even possible for the Absolute, which is infinite, to be understood by finite humans? Before we can claim to know God, first we need to grapple with the problem of the very possibility of knowing God. The question of "how can we claim to know at all" is the domain of the field of epistemology, or the science of human knowledge and perception.

The scope of the present work is not to attempt to put an end to all religious contention, nor to necessarily insist on a conclusive proof that one system of religious/philosophical thought is in some way superior to all others. Rather it is my desire that this book will greatly add to a larger general understanding of the basic issues of derivation of religious authority as these issues pertain specifically to the realm of

epistemology, or the systematic study of the nature of knowing. The focus of this work is centered upon the little studied, and even less understood, school of Vedic epistemology. Though it is undoubtedly one of the most ancient systems in the world dedicated to the study of knowledge derivation, Vedic epistemology is a development in the history of philosophy that has been routinely neglected as a field of serious study by the majority of both academic observers of the history and philosophy of religion, as well as by most spiritual seekers and lay-persons. It is my hope that this work will mark the beginning of a greater interest in this fascinating subject.

My book focuses directly on issues of epistemology, as well as determining the philosophical bounds of spiritual knowledge. Specifically, I undertake a comparative analysis of the perceptual processes utilized to derive knowledge of ontologically transmaterial realities (God, soul, etc.) in the philosophical systems of Hinduism, Buddhism, and the whole of the Western philosophical tradition (with special emphasis on Plato, Augustine and Anselm). While the ultimate goal of my book is conducting an examination of Vedic epistemology per se, I am purposefully centering the focus of this book on the theories of the 16^{th} Century philosopher, Jīva Gosvāmin. Jīva Gosvāmin's epistemological

theories represent an interesting approach in the long history of South Asian religion relative to the question of what, precisely, constitutes authoritative knowledge. In many ways, Jīva both personifies radical orthodoxy, while simultaneously being a very original thinker.

I decided to focus on the epistemological ideas of this specific philosopher because his epistemological teachings serves as a highly representative axial milieu around which to understand both the full scope of Hindu epistemology, as well as many of the specific issues and implications that arise from this subject.

Unlike the majority of Hindu philosophers, Jīva Gosvāmin (c. 1511 - c. 1596) feels that the *smṛti* literature is more authoritative than *śruti*, and thus rests the basis of his epistemology, not on the *Vedas*, but on the *Purāṇa* literature. Additionally, he takes the rather unusual approach of accepting ten distinct ways of knowing (*pramāṇas*) as all being epistemically authoritative. Despite the fact that Jīva Gosvāmin's philosophical theories represent a somewhat unique approach to the field of Hindu epistemology, very sparse research has thus far been attempted in the Western world on this Indian thinker.

I have several aims in this present work. First, since Jīva Gosvāmin represents a school of thought relatively unknown in the Western world, I will present an outline of his epistemological theories and place them within the greater context of Indian philosophy. This will be accomplished by surveying his theories as contained in his two most important works: *Tattva-saṃdarbha* and his autocommentary on the same, the *Sarva-saṃvādinī*. Second, I will analyze and critique his arguments from a philosophical perspective using propositional, comparative, and veridical analyses. Third, I will explore the significance of Jīva Gosvāmin's ideas for Vedānta. Lastly, I will speak about the implications of these epistemological theories for the future of epistemology and philosophy of religion.

Again, employing Jīva Gosvāmin's ideas as a philosophical anchor and as a backdrop for the cultural milieu that represented the historical height of inter-philosophical epistemological debate, the ultimate goal of this work is actually to present the profound insights and practical efficacy of the Vedic way of knowing God. Though this may seem at first glance to be a rigidly academic work, it is my hope that academic scholars will, in actuality, serve as only a secondary audience for this work. My primary audience

are those sincere spiritual practitioners, *yogīs/yoginīs*, dedicated Hindus, and followers of Dharma globally who wish to have a more thorough understanding of precisely what it means to know God in the Vedic tradition, and to thus deepen their own experience of the presence of God in their everyday lives.

As I hope this work will make abundantly clear, God is not merely an interesting idea designed to serve as the theoretical kindling of fueled academic debate. Rather, God is the grounding ontological principle that makes all conceptual and perceptual activities on the part of all human beings even possible. It is, indeed, in knowing the Absolute that we have access to knowing absolute knowledge.

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Chapter I
Framing the Preliminary Discussion

The Urge to Know

Each and every rational being commences life in this world with the inherent impetus to expand his or her individual perimeters of experience, knowledge and insight. This basic cognitive urge is as crucial a need as are the biological urges to eat, drink and breathe. The urge to know is why we read a newspaper in the morning; the urge to know is why we ask people about the current weather; the urge to know is why we go to school, read books, or gossip with our neighbors. This natural urge for knowledge is a vivid confirmation of the quintessential need for truth on the part of all human beings. This search for truth, on a larger scale, is the purported goal of every school and tradition of philosophy and religion, as well as every discipline within the more concrete realm of the empirical sciences.

The perennial search for truth is negated neither by geographic and ethnic demarcation, nor by conceptual or ideological framework. The reality of a "truth" - even if it is prematurely declared by the individual seeker of truth

that the truth of the matter is that there is no truth - is a universally understood concept and desiderative. This omnihistorical and transgeographical nature of the search for truth is, consequently, no less a fact for the many ancient philosophical schools of Asia than it is for the better-known philosophies of the post-Enlightenment Western world.

Throughout the last century, a good deal of cursory investigation into the various schools of South Asian philosophy has been carried out by Euro-American scholars, with the vast bulk of Euro-American interest being bestowed upon the well known tradition of Vedānta. This longstanding Western fascination with Vedānta, however, has been disproportionately preoccupied with only one of the many valid schools of Vedānta, namely the monistic Advaita interpretation of Śaṃkara (ca. 8th century C.E.).[1] So exclusive has Euro-American interest been with this one specific sectarian expression of Vedānta that, to the minds of many, both scholars as well as lay-people, the very term "Vedānta" is itself very often seen as being nothing less than synonymous with the Advaita tradition. Both historically and philosophically, however, Vedānta is very far from being undifferentiated from the specific school of Ad-

[1] Or ca. 200-168 B.C.E. according to many traditional Hindu sources.

vaita Vedānta.

It has only been in recent decades that scholars have begun in earnest to acknowledge the historical antiquity, weight and profound insights of the philosophical arguments expounded by the more explicitly theistic schools of Vedānta.[2] Included among the latter schools are: the Viśiṣṭādvaita school of Rāmānuja (1017-1137 C.E.),[3] the Dvaita doctrine (or Tattvavāda) of Madhva (1197-1276 C.E.), Vallabha's (1473-1531 C.E.) Śuddhādvaita, Vijñānabhikṣu's (fl. 1550-1600 C.E.) Avibhāgādvaita, and Jīva Gosvāmin's (1511-1596 C.E.) Acintya-bhedābhedavāda, among many others.[4] One of the ancillary goals of the present work is to shed some light on the latter of these non-Advaitic *saṃpradāyas* (schools of thought) in my goal of examining the Vedic method of knowing God. I will, however, necessarily touch

[2] A few of the more recent Euro-American academicians who have made in-depth studies into the non-Advaitic forms of Vedānta include Keith Yandell of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, John Carman of Harvard, Julius Lipner at Cambridge, and Martin Gansten of Sweden.

[3] These are the traditional dates given to Rāmānuja's life, according to which, he should have lived to be an amazing 120 years of age.

[4] According to Dr. Roma Chaudhuri "...Vedānta is a generic name, not a specific one...it stands for as many as ten different schools, each with many branches or sub-systems of its own." (Chaudhuri, Vol. I, 19). As will be shown later in this study, the tradition of Vedānta is both much more varied, as well as much older, than is often assumed.

upon at least some aspects of the doctrines of most of these schools in the course of my explication and philosophical analysis.

Of the above mentioned non-Advaitic philosophical traditions, perhaps the one which is least known and understood in the West is that represented by Jīva Gosvāmin. A somewhat influential philosophical school in parts of northern and eastern India,[5] the *saṃpradāya* of Jīva Gosvāmin has begun to attract the interest of some Euro-American philosophers only in very recent years. Rather than focus the present study on the teachings of Jīva Gosvāmin in their entirety, however, I have chosen to focus my efforts on only one crucial aspect of his thought, namely his epistemology.

Why Epistemology?

All able Philosophers throughout the stretch of time -

[5] Specifically, the Gauḍīya sect of Jīva Gosvāmin has its largest following in West Bengal, Orissa, Bihar, Assam and Manipur in the eastern part of India, as well as the Braj/Mathurā area of the north. The sect also has a sprinkling of followers in Rajasthan and Gujarat, as well as a larger following in the nation of Bangladesh. Outside of the South Asian sub-continent, a more heterodox form of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism has become popular due to the activities of ISKCON (The International Society for Krishna Consciousness) and several of its offshoots.

whether we are speaking of Descartes, Hume and Kant in the European context, or Śaṃkara, Rāmānuja and Madhva in South Asia - have recognized the crucial role that epistemology plays in any all-encompassing philosophical construct.[6] The various intricate claims of metaphysics, ethics, ontology, soteriology[7] and theology can potentially be investigated, formulated and debated endlessly, as the highly contentious histories of both philosophical and religious debate have vividly shown us. Before one can even begin to legitimately speculate on the minutiae of philosophical and theological subject matters, however, one must first precisely demonstrate how it is even possible to arrive at the purported knowledge that one claims to possess. Before analyzing what a philosophy claims to know, in other words, we must first ask the crucial question: how does one even claim to "know" anything at all? The fundamental question of "whence the proper derivation of authority" is

[6] In the realm of Hinduism, for example, almost every foundational philosophical text (*sūtra*) of each and every traditional philosophical school begins with an exposition of epistemology. First the school in question establishes what it will accept as valid ways of knowing. The *Yoga-sūtras*, for example, states: *pratyakṣa-anumāna-āgamāḥ-pramāṇāni*, "Valid congnition is predicated on perception, inference, and scripture." (1.7) The *Brahma-sūtras* similarly state as its epistemic criterion: *śāstrayonitvāt*, "Scripture is the source of knowledge of the Absolute." (1.3)

[7] Soteriology is the science and the study of the nature of liberation or salvation.

the first critical question to be dealt with in every philosophical system – religious or otherwise. Consequently, every philosophical superstructure, however seemingly imposing and impenetrable an edifice, has epistemology as its stabilizing foundation.

Jīva Gosvāmin's general thought still represents a relatively unmarked territory of scholarship for most Euro-American academicians. His ideas on epistemology specifically have been almost completely unexplored by Western academia. I therefore felt it necessary to begin the process of exploring Jīva Gosvāmin's Vedānta philosophy at this very fundamental level of epistemology. It is my hope that this present work will be only the first chapter in an ongoing effort on the part of other scholars to study the other dimensions of this original Vedāntic philosopher's thought.

What makes Jīva Gosvāmin's consciously Vedic-based epistemology an especially interesting topic of study from a Euro-American philosophical perspective is that Vedic epistemology's functioning is predicated upon a direct experience of the truth, which for the Vedic world-view is non-different from the Absolute Reality - Bhagavān, or God. Epistemology is therefore firmly based upon ontology in the Hindu world-view. Moreover, it is based, not on on-

tology as merely a matter for philosophical speculation, but on very real, immediate and experienceable ontological states. While many other schools of philosophy - both Hindu (*vaidika*) and non-Hindu (*avaidika*) - hold very similar, if not seemingly identical views, Jīva's very specific approach is singularly distinctive in respect to where he chooses to place the precise locus of epistemological authority. He finds this authority situated in the direct, non-mediated insight into the nature of the Absolute that is said to have been perceived by the ancient sage Vyāsa and recorded in the very specific scriptural text known as the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*.

In leading to his epistemological conclusions, Jīva Gosvāmin originates four original theories that distinguish him quite markedly from the majority of previous orthodox Hindu philosophers. These four original developments are the following. 1) He accepts the surpisingly large total of ten valid ways of knowing (*pramāṇas*) as being epistemologically authoritative. Most Vedāntists previous to Jīva accepted only the three *pramāṇas* of a) *pratyakṣa* (perception or empiricism)[8], b) *anumāna* (inference) and c) *śabda*

[8] Though the term "*pratyakṣa*" ordinarily refers to "perception" in most schools of both Indian generally and Hindu philosophy specifically,

(divine word)[9]. 2) He gives authoritative precedence to the *smṛti* literature over the *śruti* canon. Jīva takes this position to the point of giving the Purāṇic literature a higher status than the Vedic literature. This is a position that is clearly at odds with the majority opinion of Hindu (*vaidika*) scholars, for whom the Vedic literature (*śruti*) is without doubt the highest authority on all matters religious and philosophical. 3) He finds his ultimate epistemic authority very specifically in the direct insight into the nature of the Absolute that was perceived by the sage Vyāsa and then recorded in the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*. 4) Moreover, with both the *Brahma-sūtras* and the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* having been written by the same author (Vyāsa), Jīva holds that the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* is the natural auto-commentary of the author on the *Brahma-sūtras*.

Date of the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*'s Composition

Dating the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* has proven to be an exceedingly challenging task for most scholars, despite the

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Jīva's use of the term is often closer to a more general sense of empiricism.

[9] One exception to this general trend is Madhva (1197-1276 CE), who, like the Nyāya school, in addition to accepting the above three *pramāṇas*, also accepts *upamāna*, or analogy, as a forth valid *pramāṇa*.

contradictory claims of a large number of persons to have succeeded at doing so.[10] For example, Winternitz, Surendranath Dasgupta and Vaidya all claim that it was composed some time during the tenth century of the Common Era. S. Radhakrishnan and J.N. Farquhar, on the other hand, both subscribe to the ninth century C.E. as the probable century of its origin. S.D. Gyani is convinced that the work can be no later that 1200-1000 B.C.E. Traditional Hindu sources and scholars consider the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* to be a work written during the beginning of the present cyclic age, or *yuga*. Since our present age, known as *kali-yuga*, began in 2976 B.C.E., many Hindu scholars hold that the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* can be no more recent than 2900 B.C.E[11].

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[10] Dating Hindu texts in general has proven to be a difficulty that is not exclusive to the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*. The exact dates of composition of many of the most important ancient texts of the Hindu tradition - including the *Bhagavad-gītā*, most of the *Purāṇas*, the Vedic *Saṃhitas*, *Upaniṣads*, and *Śāstras* of every description - has proven to be extremely elusive to both Euro-American and modern Indian scholars. Dates of composition for many of these texts may vary by as much as several thousand years, thus leading to a great deal of contention on the part of modern scholars in their attempts to settle on precise dates for these texts. Possible dates for the *Ṛg Veda*, for example, have ranged from 6000 BCE – 1400 BCE.

[11] For further debate on the process of dating the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, see D.R. Mankad, Puranic Chronology, p. x, as well as Clifford Hospital's "*Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*" in Steven Rosen's Vaiṣṇavism: Contemporary Scholars Discuss the Gauḍīya Tradition (61).

At the very least, we can probably safely conjecture that the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* was first composed no more recently than several centuries prior to the life of the Dvaitin philosopher Madhva (1197-1276 C.E.). This we know because in his own 13th century commentary upon the work, called the *Bhāgavata-tātparya-nirṇaya*, he mentions eight other commentaries on the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* that were then in existence.[12] That so many commentaries had already been written on this Purāṇic work even prior to Madhva shows the great authority and importance that Hindu scholars had obviously bestowed upon the work even then. To conjecture that a work of very recent origin would engender such respect on the part of such a large number of scholars is highly unlikely to say the least. Thus, logical inferece dictatates that the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* had to have predated Madhva's 13th century commentary by many centuries at a shear minimum.

It is more likely that the work had existed for, at the very least, several centuries previous to any of these commentar-

[12] Included among these commentators, Madhva mentions Hanumāna. It is quite possible that this is the same Hanumāna who wrote the *Hanumannāṭaka*, a play that was known to Bhoja, who himself lived between 600 and 700 C.E.

ies coming into being. Additionally, Gauḍapāda (ca. 5th century C.E.), the grand *ācārya*[13] (preceptor) of Śaṃkara, is known to have employed elements directly taken from the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* in at least two of his works: 1) in his *Māṅdūkya-kārikā*, and 2) in his *bhāṣya* (commentary) on the *Uttaragītā*.[14] This strong evidence seems to prove rather conclusively that the composition of the work cannot have been more recent than at least the 4th/5th century, if not centuries or millennia earlier. Whatever the final case may be, determining the exact date of the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*'s creation and composition is not the primary aim of this present work.

Scope of the Present Work

The following work is a project of philosophical analysis situated within the field of philosophy of religion. The goal of this book is not merely to create a hisotrical reporting of the ideas of certain individual philosophers of antiquity, or

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[13] The *Mahābhārata* (12.313.23) compares the functional aspect of an *ācārya* to a ferryman and the knowledge s/he imparts to the ferry itself. Additionally, three categories of *ācārya* are distinguished in the *Brahma-vidyā-upaniṣad* (51-52): 1) *codaka*, the prompter, 2) *bodhaka*, the awakener, and 3) *mokṣa-da*, the bestower of liberation.

[14] For further elaboration, see B.N. Krishnamurti Sharma, *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute,* Vol. XIV, p. 216, Poona.

even of the development of specific schools of thought within the current of history of either Indian or world philosophy. The goal of this work is not to merely provide a historical account, but it is rather an active and conscious engagement in the philosophical enterprise with the goal of objectively examining the nature of Vedic epistemology, with the ultimate conclusion being that the Vedic means of approaching a meaningful knowledge of God is the highest and most effective means of directly knowing, perceiving and experience the Divine. My goal is to both explain the Vedic approach to knowing God, as well as to prove that the Vedic way of knowing God is the most direct way available to human beings. Thus, this book is not a work on the history of philosophy. It is a philosophical work in and of its very own nature.

In achieving the above goals, I will pursue several contiguous tasks.

A) I will first present a detailed outline of Jīva Gosvāmin’s epistemological theories by placing them within the greater context of the more important schools of both Hindu philosophy and the greater realm of Indian philosophy generally. This will be accomplished by surveying Jīva Gosvāmin's theories as contained in his two greatest epis-

temological works *Tattva-saṃdarbha* and *Sarva-saṃvādinī*[15] in direct juxtaposition with the epistemological theories of earlier Indian philosophers – both Hindu and non-Hindu. This will be done by giving an account of the history and views of several of the major schools and individuals in the history of pre-Caitanya Indian philosophy. Such an approach necessitates that I provide a rather comprehensive overview of the positions of these earlier philosophers by analyzing their teachings in their own words, as recorded in the primary texts ascribed to these respective philosophers.

B) I will then provide an in-depth critical description of the epistemology of Jīva Gosvāmin himself. In addition to giving an account of his arguments that will be derived

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[15] The latter is a six volume work and serves as a *summa* of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava philosophy and theology. For this reason, it is primarily the *Ṣaṭ-saṃdarbha* that I will focus on in the present study. This *magnum opus* of Jīva Gosvāmin's is divided into six sections. These include: 1) *Tattva-saṃdarbha* ("Composition on Truth"), 2) *Bhāgavata-saṃdarbha* ("Composition on God"), 3) *Paramātma-saṃdarbha* ("Composition on the Supreme Self"), 4) *Bhakti-saṃdarbha* ("Composition on Devotion"), 5) *Prīti-saṃdarbha* ("Composition on Love"), 6) *Kṛṣṇa-saṃdarbha* ("Composition on Kṛṣṇa"). Of these six volumes, *Tattva-Saṃdarbha* serves both as a summary of the philosophical arguments to be discussed in the work as a whole, as well as an in-depth explanation and defense of the epistemological criteria that Jīva accepts in support of these arguments. It is from the *Tattva-saṃdarbha*, then, in addition to the *Sarva-saṃvādinī*, that the bulk of Jīva's epistemological theory is derived.

directly from his own writings, I will also provide several original metaphorical devices and examples that are necessary in order to draw out Jīva's position in a way that is more readily accessible to an audience trained in Euro-American philosophical and methodological concepts, as well as currently defacto Western-situated, cultural perspectival *locus standi*.

C) I will conduct a systematic critical examination of the validity of Jīva's epistemological claims from a philosophical, historical and literary perspective. This task will occupy a large portion of my efforts in this work. I will critique Jīva Gosvāmin's four original theories in support of his argument that the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* is the highest epistemological authority in the scriptural canon of the Hindu tradition. I will acknowledge his acceptance of a total of ten *pramāṇas* to be unique in the history of Indian philosophy, but of little actual philosophical and epistemological significance. I will then critique his other three arguments by making reference to various internal inconsistencies in these arguments that are philosophical, theological and literary in nature.

D) Fourth, I will explore the implications of Jīva Gosvāmin's epistemological claims for the interpretation of

Vedānta philosophy by assessing his claims in the specific light of the epistemological theories of the three most important Vedānta thinkers: Śaṃkara, Rāmānuja and Madhva. Jīva Gosvāmin, while appearing to be an original thinker on a cursory reading, proves upon more rigorous examination to be highly dependent upon these three antecedent philosophers for much of his epistemological theory.

E) I will then comparatively examine the Vedic concept of *śabda* (Divine Word) vis-à-vis the epistemological conclusions of several of the more important non-Hindu philosophical schools. This begins with comparing *śabda* and *āpta* (reliable persons as valid sources of knowledge) in the Hindu tradition juxtaposed with similar concepts in Buddhist philosophy. My emphases in the latter will include the theories of the well-known Buddhist philosophers Nagārjuna and Dharmakīrti. My comparative analysis involving European philosophy will include Plato and Augustine. I will perform these comparative studies with the aim of placing the Vedic concept of *śabda* (Divine Word) in a more global and trans-historical perspective.

F) I will then look at the possible implications of Jīva's concept of *acintya*, or inconceivability, in the search for a

philosophically valid argument for God's existence.[16] This will be necessarily preceded by a brief overview of the history of such arguments in the histories of both Indian and Euro-American philosophy. This section will culminate in a comparative study of Jīva's idea of *acintya* (inconceivability) and St. Anselm's (1033-1109 C.E.) idea of God as "That than which nothing greater can be conceived", otherwise known as the famous Ontological Argument.

G) Lastly, I will briefly examine any possible peripheral contributions of the concept of *śabda* (divine word) to the field of philosophy of religion generally, followed by my concluding thoughts.

Methodology

There are several methods that can be used in the specific task of exploring the philosophical content of a historical thinker's world-view. Among many other techniques of

[16] By the term "God", I am not referring to any form of sectarian concept such as the "Christian" God versus the "Hindu" God versus the “Islamic God”, or even to such theological concepts of personal versus non-personal concepts of Godhead. Rather, I am very simply referring to the more philosophically accepted concept of a *summum bonum* Absolute, i.e., *X* transcendent source of known reality that is omnicompetent in its *sui generis* nature. This concept of the Absolute is referred to in the Vedānta tradition by the term “Brahman”.

analysis currently in use, these methods include:

a) Looking purely at the many inter-linking chains of historical causality responsible for the development and maturity of the given thinker's ideas.

b) Exploring the myriad social, economic, psychological and environmental external conditions that helped give rise to the person's ideas.

c) Doing a literary analysis of the thinker's works, often coupled with an attempt to ascertain the date of composition (if this information is at all contested).

d) Performing a comparative and/or contrastive analysis of the philosopher's thought in juxtaposition with that of other philosophers, philosophical schools or world-views.

I will necessarily be employing several of the above indispensable research methods in my book in an attempt to outline the Vedic way of knowing God and critique Jīva Gosvāmin's ideas.

All of these techniques can, in turn, theoretically be done from either a Marxist, or a feminist, or a post-modernist, or a materialist, or a deconstructionist, or a Christian, or a Freudian perspective, among many other ideological options. Additionally, which method the author employs in writing a philosophical account depends to a great degree upon whether the author wishes to a) only provide an account of the philosophical content of the historical figure in question, or b) engage in an additional conscious philosophical assessment of the ideas discussed.

In the present work, it is my hope that I will be performing both of these latter tasks. I will be systematically reconstructing the thought of Jīva Gosvāmin with the express purpose of assessing his theories on the specific question of what constitutes the highest scriptural authority in Hinduism - and thus the highest epistemological authority in Hindu (*vaidika*) philosophy.

The specific methods that I will use in this book include a) literary analyses of several primary Sanskrit sources (primarily Jīva Gosvāmin's *Tattva-saṃdarbha*), b) a historical analysis of the philosophical antecedents responsible for the formulating of Jīva's thought, c) and performing comparative studies of Jīva's thought in comparison to other

Asian and Euro-American schools of thought. Additionally, I will explore what significance the phenomenological experience of the *samādhi* (meditative absorption) state experienced by the *ṛṣis* (the ancient revealers of Hindu scriptures) may have had in the formulation of *śabda* theory.

The primary task of my book, however, is not limited solely to a historical reporting of Jīva Gosvāmin's epistemology, but to an active and conscious philosophical analysis on my part of his epistemology employing the tools of propositional and veridical analysis[17] as they are found and used in both the Western and Hindu fields of philosophy. Rather

[17] While traditional Aristotelian logic is only formal, i.e., only seeks to discern whether an argument is structurally valid, for general Indian logic, arguments must be sound (true) in addition to being valid. Propositional analysis is a method for determining whether *x* truth-claim is structurally valid within the context of formal logical principles. Veridical analysis, a new term that I have personally created, seeks to know, additionally, whether *X* truth-claim corresponds with the truth of reality. E.G.: A) All Leprechauns are Deontologists. B) Matthew is a Leprechaun. C) Therefore Matthew is a Deontologist. While such a claim is structurally sound, it is also not true, given the generally accepted non-existence of leprechauns. Hindu logic is predicated upon the idea that logical claims that are not consistent with the reality of the situation under question are somewhat akin to speculating about the color of the unicorn who ate my flower garden last night as I slept. To analyse any epistemological theory that is predicated upon the importance of revealing truth, without then analyzing the nature of the "truth" arrived upon by that method, is to be intellectually lethargic and ethically dishonest. Thus my decision to employ Veridical Analysis thoughout this work.

than just reporting on philosophy, then, the real aim of my book will be to actually *do* philosophy in a very active sense. The actual purpose of this work is to examine the Vedic way of knowing and directly experiencing God. Since I will be very consciously using Hindu tools and methods of philosophical analysis, in addition to the standardly accepted Euro-American methods, in my task of examining Jīva Gosvāmin's world-view, this work can be justifiably described as a specific instance of Hindu philosophy in contemporary application, in addition to being a work of philosophy of religion generally.

The Term "Vaidika" (Vedic) in the Normative and the Post-Vedic Sense

In the normative sense of the term "*vaidika*", or "Vedic", is a word that refers to the Vedic culture of ancient India (c. 4500-2500 BCE), as well as to those individuals who follow that culture, both historically and in the present day. Thus, rather than referring only to the practices, outlooks, and cultural norms of the ancient Vedic society as it was civilizationally instantiated in ancient times, the term "*vaidika*" represents a continuity of religious culture and tradition that is still being practiced down to our very present day. In this regard, I, along with the majority of modern schol-

ars of South Asian religion, reject the outmoded “Aryan Invasion Theory”, which postulated the notion that Vedic culture was a phenomenon extrinsic to the South Asian sub-continent, and imperialistically imposed upon the “native” inhabitants by force. Georg Feuerstein sums up the fallacious nature of this invalidated theory:

> Until recently, most Western and Indian scholars tended to emphasize the element of discontinuity in India’s cultural evolution. In partictular, they saw a clash between the civilization of the Indus Valley and the Vedic “Aryan” culture, which they thought originated outside of India. However, this longstanding theory of the Aryan invasion is now being vigorously challenged. A growing number of scholars, both in India and in the West, regard this historical model as a scientific myth, which was constructed in the absence of adequate evidence and which has adversely influenced our understanding of ancient India’s history and culture.
>
> (82)

The terms “Vaidika”/”Vedic” refers to a continuous, homogenous, and unbroken religio-cultural tradition stretching back beyond the mists of pre-history, and continuing to be actively and faithfully practiced to this very day. The appellation "*vaidika*" is, thus, properly used to

designate those who have orally transmitted the *Vedas*, who accept the validity of the *Vedas* as the most authoritative means of understanding our place in the universe, and who manually perform the *gṛhya* and *śrauta yajñas* down to our own era.

Traditional Vedic culture was based upon several genres of texts, known collectively as the *śruti* literature. According to David Knipe,

> "This vast body of shruti included in antiquity as many as several score of separate texts. Over the centuries many were lost, but the extant corpus is still enormous, with some of the survivors reaching more than a thousand pages in contemporary printed editions. From the nontraditional, text-critical point of view this corpus is a series of genres that required a full millennium to complete."
>
> (Knipe, 28)

Śruti consists of four collections, or genres, of texts: the *Saṃhitas*, the *Brāhmaṇas*, the *Āraṇyakas* and the *Upaniṣads*. The *Saṃhita* texts consist of four scriptures: the *Ṛg, Yajur, Sāma*, and *Atharva Saṃhitas*. These texts were all composed approximately 4000-2000 BCE. The *Ṛg-veda* exists primarily in the form of hymns to the Vedic gods,

such as Indra, Agni, Mitra, etc. The *Yajur-veda* is a manual of *mantras* and directions important for the performance of ritual sacrifice. The *Sāma-veda* is an index of melodies used in the *soma yajña*. Finally, the *Atharva-veda* is concerned mostly with domestic and popular religion. It contains spells, charms and *mantras* designed to be healing in nature. (Knipe, 28)

The *Brāhmaṇas* (2600-1500 BCE) are a voluminous collection of texts that are primarily concerned with explanations of the Vedic sacrifice. The *Āraṇyakas* (late Vedic era) and the *Upaniṣads* (1900-1500 BCE) are both considered "forest treatise" genres and contain similar material. Both deal with sacred teachings about the metaphysical meaning of sacrifice, as well as the nature of Brahman (God) and *ātman* (self). Toward the end of the Vedic era (around 2100-1900 BCE), various ritual manuals known as the *Śrauta-sūtras*, containing rules and directions for the more important *yajñas* (fire ceremonies) were compiled and edited. The *Śrauta-sūtras*, along with the *Gṛhya-sūtras* (which deal with domestic rituals) and the *Dharma-sūtras* (general compilations of religious law), are known collectively as the *Kalpa-sūtras*.

The early Vedic world-view and religion involved several integral elements. These include 1) the Cosmic Puruṣa concept, 2) the replication of the sacrifice of the Cosmic Puruṣa, and 3) the centrality of the metaphysical law of *ṛta*. With the Cosmic Puruṣa concept, the cosmos is seen as a projection of the body of a mythical cosmic man (the literal meaning of *puruṣa*), who is widely interpreted to be God. The *yajña* (fire ceremony) ritual is seen as a formulaic replication of this primordial sacrifice. According to the Vedic view, it is the ongoing responsibility of humanity to regenerate and sustain the cosmos via sacrifice (*yajña*). Indeed, until we reach the Upaniṣadic era, the Vedic religion is primarily centered upon a deep dedication to ritual and *yajña*. Even in the *Upaniṣads* themselves, the *Veda* is seen as speculation about ritual, about *yajña*. As a precursor to the later concept of *Dharma* (the Natural Law that undergirds reality), *ṛta* is seen as the trans-empirical ordering principle behind all events and phenomena in the empirical world.

Though the terms “Vedic” and “*vaidika*” are normatively used to indicate the specific world-view and religious practices of the pre-Purāṇic era, the same appellations are also appropriated by textually post-Vedic, Classical schools of Hindu philosophy and ritual, and in many cases rightfully

so. Some of these Classical schools adhere closely to descendants of the various *śākhas*, or branches of Vedic ritual, while others are only partially involved in actual Vedic ritual. Still some other post-Vedic traditions are quite remote from the Vedic school in both adherence to the Vedic texts and in their ritual systems. For many of these post-Vedic schools, the terms "Vedic" and "*vaidika*" include later texts, such as the *Purāṇas*. It is in this latter sense that Jīva Gosvāmin is to be considered a Vaidika philosopher, even though he regards other texts – specifically the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* - as higher in authority than the four textually accepted *Vedas* themselves.

Used in a broader context, the term "*vaidika*" has two associated, yet rather different, meanings. One is the meaning outlined above, i.e., a follower of the ancient Vedic culture and world-view in the strictest sense of upholding and practicing the elaborately ritual-centered ceremonies outlined in the Vedic corpus. The second meaning, however, is much more philosophical and theological in nature, and refers ultimately to the epistemological stance taken by the traditional schools of Hindu philosophy. In this sense the word "*vaidika*" is employed to differentiate those schools of Indian philosophy that accept the epistemological validity

of the *Veda*, juxtaposed with the *avaidika* schools that do not. Stated in simpler terms, "Vaidika" simply refers to those persons who accept the *Veda* as their sacred scripture, and thus as their source of valid knowledge about spiritual matters. Any follower of the *Vedas* is a Vaidika. In this latter interpretation of the term, *vaidika* is more commonly used in the non-normative, more textually inclusive, sense of the term.

Clarification of Terminology: "Hindu" Versus Vaidika/Vedic

Rather than use either the prevailing, but painfully ambiguous and inaccurate term "Hindu", or the wholly erroneous and overly-employed word "Brahmanical", I have very consciously decided to use more historically accurate, even if more doctrinally technical, terms throughout this work in respect for this tradition. The terms "Vaidika" and "Vedic" refer to the *Veda*-based religious and philosophical traditions of South Asia throughout the bulk of this work. These are, thus, the primary terms that I will use in this book.[18]

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[18] By the term "*Veda*-based", I am including both *Veda* in the normative sense, meaning specifically the *śruti* literature, as well as in the more textually inclusive traditions of post-Vedic Hinduism.

The term "Hindu" is not attested to in any of the pre-medieval Sanskrit literature, especially the philosophical and theological literature. Additionally, it is not a term that has been either indigenous to the region that gave birth to the Vedic religion or employed by the followers of this religio-philosophical world-view until only rather recently (the last two or three centuries). The inaccurate words "Hindu" and "Hinduism" became terms of legal significance only beginning in the 19th century under the British Raj. Klaus Klostermaier explains the origin of the term "Hindu" in the following way:

> The very name Hinduism owes its origin to chance; foreigners in the West extending the name of the province of Sindh to the whole country lying across the Indus River and simply calling all its inhabitants Hindus and their religion Hinduism. Hindus, however, appropriated the designation and use it themselves today to identify themselves over against, for example, Muslims and Christians.
>
> (Klostermaier, 31)

Thus, the terms "Hindu" and "Hinduism" are words that, while possibly convenient in usage, are neither accurate nor useful in any historical, religious or philosophical sense.

"Brahmanical", in a similar vein, is a term used mostly by Euro-American scholars to specifically designate the ideas, social culture and supposed political maneuverings of only one *varṇa* (class) of "Hindus", namely the *brahmaṇas* (the priests and intellectuals who served as the guardians and preservers of Vedic culture). This term, however, is of a highly disingenuous nature since it implies that the only "Hindus" who ever took the philosophy, culture and religion of "Hinduism" to be of any personal significance were the *brahmaṇas*, and even then, merely as a mechanism for ensuring their own political and economic dominance over the other three *varṇas* (classes). Such a politically loaded claim, overtly stated, would be wholly unsupportable to say the least. Using the term "brahmanical" to refer to the Vaidika religion is as derogatory, bigoted, and disingenuous as using the woefully outdated terms "Popish" to refer to the Roman Catholic Church, or "Lamaist" to refer to Tibetan and Mongolian Buddhism.

More precisely, the ancient and living religious tradition that is predicated upon the Vedic scriptures is termed Sanātana Dharma by the Sanskrit scriptures of this tradition, as well as by both the leaders and practitioners of this religion throughout its very long history, and to this very

day. The term Sanātana Dharma can be translated as "The Eternal Natural Way". Sanātana Dharma is the true, most accurate, and most acceptible name of the religion that is mistakenly called "Hinduism". Sanātana Dharma represents the correct name of this religio-philosophical system from a metaphysical, historical, and broadly ideological perspective. "Vaidika", on the other hand, is the name of the very same tradition as reflected in the more specifically epistemological and scripturally-oriented concerns of the tradition, as well as in juxtaposition to those religio-philosophical schools that lay outside of the Vedic tradition. Thus, both Sanātana Dharma and Vaidika Dharma are alternative technical terms both of which refer synonymously to the one Vedic spiritual tradition. This being a work focusing upon Vedic epistemology per se, I will thus use the term "Vaidika" to refer to the tradition, rather than the more broadly used "Sanātana Dharma".

Unlike the misnomer “Hindu”, the word "*vaidika*" is clearly attested to in the Sanskrit literature - especially in the religio-philosophical and logic treatises that will serve as the primary sources for the present book - and is employed repeatedly and consciously by the very subjects under discussion in this work, i.e., the philosophers of the seven main philosophical schools of the Vaidika (Hindu) tradi-

tion. The term, very significantly and simply, denotes those who accept the epistemological (and thus more broadly religio-philosophical) authority of the *Vedas*. Within the tradition of the *Sapta-darśanas* (the seven main schools of Vedic thought), Vaidika philosophy has been historically distinguished from *avaidika* schools of thought - or philosophical systems not based upon acceptance of the authority of the *Vedas*. Though Jīva Gosvāmin is of the heterodox opinion that the *smṛti* literature takes precedence over the *śruti* literature, he nonetheless is clearly a Vaidika philosopher since he does accept the ultimate authority of the *Veda* - even if not its supreme authority. Such minimal epistemological acceptance of the *Veda* is precisely what distinquishes a follower of Vedic spirituality from someone who is not.

Keen accuracy in the employment of terminology is of central importance for any field that purports the uncovering of truth as its primary aim. This is the case whether we are speaking of any of the serious sciences, or of philosophy as a whole. Thus, in order to ensure accuracy in terminology, I will be consciously and deliberately using the terms Vaidika and Vedic, rather than the meaningles terms

“Hindu”/”Hinduism”, throughout the pages of this book to refer to the *Veda*-based religious tradition.

Literature Review

Quite unlike the case with the better known Indian philosophers (e.g., Śaṃkara and Rāmānuja), direct scholarship expositing the thought and writings of Jīva Gosvāmin is very scant indeed. The present book represents the first systematic academic attempt to examine Jīva Gosvāmin's epistemology in English. There are two translations of Jīva's *Tattva-saṃdarbha*: one scholarly translation by Stuart Elkman (*Jīva Gosvāmin’s Tattvasandarbha*, 1986) and one done by the two Hare Krishna devotees Nārāyaṇa Dāsa and Kuṇḍalī Dāsa (*Śrī Tattva-Sandarbha*, 1995). Additionally, Tripurāri Svāmī, a Hare Krishna writer, has attempted a non-academic summary study of Jīva's *Tattva-saṃdarbha* entitled *Jīva Goswāmī’s Tattva-Sandarbha* (1995). Jīva Gosvāmin's other five *Saṃdarbhas* have yet to be translated into English at the time of this writing.

The only secondary works dealing directly with Jīva Gosvāmin's thought are Mahanamabrata Brahmachari's *Vaiṣṇava Vedānta: The Philosophy of Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī.*

(1974) and Jadunath Sinha's *Jīvagosvāmī's Religion of Devotion and Love.* (1983). In addition to these, however, there are several good works that focus upon the overall philosophy of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava school (Jīva Gosvāmin's lineage) in a more general manner. These works include O.B.L. Kapoor's excellent work *The Philosophy and Religion of Śri Caitanya* (1976), Sudhindra Chandra Chakravarti's *Philosophical Foundation of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism* (1969) and Chanda Chatterjee's *The Philosophy of Chaitanya and His School* (1993). In addition to these scholarly works outlining the general philosophy of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, there are several non-academic works written by followers of the sect. Among the latter are Swami B.V. Tirtha's *Sri Chaitanya's Concept of Theistic Vedanta* (1977) and Suhotra Swami's *Substance and Shadow: The Vedic Method of Knowledge* (1996).

In addition to works directly and indirectly outlining the philosophical content of Jīva Gosvāmin's thought, there are a number of scholarly works that detail various aspects of the historical development of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition. These works include: Ramakanta Chakraborty's *Vaiṣṇavism in Bengal: 1486-1900* (1985), A.N. Chatterjee's *Srikṛṣṇa Caitanya: A Historical Study on Gauḍīya*

Vaiṣṇavism (1983), Sambidananda Das' *The History & Literature of the Gaudiya Vaishnavas and Their Relation to Other Medieval Vaishnava Schools* (1991) and Melville T. Kennedy's classic work *The Chaitanya Movement: A Study of the Vaiṣṇavism of Bengal* (1925). In addition to these scholarly works, one non-academic volume that I will cite in my biographical sketch of Jīva Gosvāmin is Steven Rosen's Hare Krishna-inspired *The Six Goswamis of Vrindavan* (1990).

Chapter II

The Philosophical Milieu

The Vaidika Literary Tradition

So vast and comprehensive is the entire corpus of traditional Sanskrit literature that, to this day, the full extent of these, in some cases quite ancient writings, [19] has never been fully cataloged by either traditional Indian scholars, or by Euro-American trained academicians.[20] At the very least, however, these many works can be divided into several very broad categories of genres.

The first of these distinctions can be seen as 1) Secular Literature, and 2) Sacred Literature. The former category is quite small and includes such works as the *Hitopadeśa*, the

[19] For example, the oldest literary work originating from the South Asian subcontinent is the *Ṛg-veda*, which is given highly diverse dates by various scholars as possible dates of composition, ranging from 6000 BCE to 1200 BCE. I have accepted the date of 3800 BCE as the most probable date for the first instance of the *Ṛg-veda* appearing in compositional form.

[20] We are aware of an estimated 3.5 million manuscripts in public and private libraries in India and abroad. Of these, a mere 1.5 million have been cataloged. Much fewer of this number have ever been translated into English. The New Catalogus Catalogorum has been published only half way through and even this incomplete catalog comprises close to 20 volumes of names of authors and works presently extant.

kāvya (poetic) works of such poets as Kalidāsa, and various court documents. Reflecting the overarching centrality of religious consciousness in ancient Vedic society, the vast bulk of traditional Vaidika writings clearly fall under the Sacred Literature category.

This category is variously termed by many traditional Vedic scholars as "*Veda*"[21], *śruti*, *śāstra*, *śabda*, etc. In the present work, I will often refer to the sacred writings of the Vaidika tradition under the more philosophically technical term of *Śāstra-pramāṇa*, or epistemically revelatory literature. This enormous library of sacred writings consists, in itself, of a vast array of different genres, formats and literary styles, and can again be divided into the three broad categories of a) *śruti*, b) *smṛti* and c) ancillary sacred texts. The former (*śruti*) are those works which are "heard" by liberated *ṛṣis* (seers, perfected *yogīs* who revealed Truth) via direct non-mediated perception of the Absolute, while the contents of the next category (*smṛti*) are considered to be "remembered", and thereby usually considered to be of a slightly less sacred nature than *śruti*. Ancillary texts are works that contain important and authoritative writings on theological

[21] "*Veda*", of course, not merely in the more denotative sense of the four *Veda-saṃhitas*, but in the more generic sense in which the word is intended: that of "knowledge" of the sacred.

and philosophical topics, but which are not generally considered to be revealed texts. Some ancillary texts, such as the *Brahma-sūtras*, are broadly accepted as authoritative throughout the entirety of the Vaidika ("Hindu") world, both historically and trans-denominationally; others are of a more limited and clearly denominational nature.[22]

Of these many genres of literature, it is the *sūtras* that hold the most fascination for historians of general Indian philosophy. *Sūtras* (literally "threads") are overtly philosophical works. The style of these *sūtras* involve very short aphorisms designed to communicate sophisticated philosophical concepts in such a way as to be easily memorized by students. Dasgupta describes the nature and function of Vaidika *sūtras* in the following way.

> The systematic treatises were written in short and pregnant half-sentences (*sūtras*) which did not elaborate the subject in detail, but seemed only to hold before the reader the lost threads of memory of elaborate disquisitions with which he was already thoroughly acquainted. It seems, therefore, that these pithy half-sentences were like lecture hints, intended for those who had direct elaborate oral instructions on the subject. It is indeed difficult to guess from the *sūtras* the extent of

[22] Such works include various *Tantras*, *Pañcaratras* and Āgamic texts.

> their significance, or how far the discussions which they gave rise to in later days were originally intended by them.
>
> (Dasgupta, vol. 1, p.63)

At least one *sūtra* work is ascribed to every individual school of Vedic philosophy. For example, there are the *Nārada-bhakti-sūtras* and the *Śāṇḍilya-bhakti-sūtras* of the Bhāgavata school. There is also a *Ñyāya-sūtra* (treatise on logic), a *Vaiśeṣika-sūtra* (treatise on categories of reality), and a *Yoga-sūtra* (teatise on Yoga philosophy), among many others. In addition to all the many Vaidika *sūtras*, there are also a number of Buddhist and Jaina *sūtras*.[23] Of the many different *sūtra* works still extant, the most famous by far are the *Brahma-sūtras* (treatise on the Absolute) of Bādarāyaṇa (Vyāsa). Designed to be a partial commentary on the philosophy of the *Upaniṣads*, it is the *Brahma-sūtras* that form the textual basis of the Vedānta school of Vaidika philosophy.

Philosophy as World-View Versus Geographically Bound Philosophy

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[23] Unlike Vaidika *sūtras*, Buddhist *sūtras* are very often written in a non-aphoristic style.

Before I commence with the historical and applied philosophy portions of this work, it would be helpful to first give a brief overview of the philosophical milieu in which Jīva's ideas were born. The philosophical outlook of the Vaidika tradition is somewhat different from what we know as contemporary Euro-American philosophy. What I am juxtaposing as Euro-American versus specifically Vaidika philosophy throughout this work is not to be confused with the categories of Indian versus Euro-American philosophy in any geographical, ethnic, nor even any necessarily historical, sense. Rather, I am contrasting the totality of Vaidika philosophy as a living school of thought versus modern, post-Cartesian Euro-American philosophy[24] as two distinct paradigmatic approaches, two distinct world-views, regardless of whether the philosopher or idea in question is of geographically Indian or of European origin. Philosophy deals with the realm of ideas, and not nationalities. This distinction is, thus, one of general philosophical stances, and not one of ethnicities.

Thus, even a contemporary Indian philosopher who uses

[24] Ranging from roughly the 17th Century to the present day, and incorporating much of what is often considered post-Medieval Euro-American philosophy.

methods, ideas, attitudes and approaches that stem from the Euro-American philosophical tradition is to be considered someone who is engaging in Euro-American (or, alternately, "Western") philosophy - either consciously or unconsciously - despite the fact that the philosopher may be ethnically Indian. Conversely, if a particular philosopher is American, European or of any other non-Indian nationality, but employs traditional Vaidika methodological procedures and insights in her task of doing philosophy, and especially if this philosopher accepts the epistemological authority of the *Vedas*, then that individual is doing philosophy from a purely Vaidika context, and this is so regardless of the person's ethnicity. The distinction is one of method, approach and goal, and not one of the philosopher's nationality or the geographic influence of the philosophical idea under discussion.

Additionally, the distinctions between Vaidika and Euro-American philosophy must not be seen as being historically bound. Contrary to much of the current academic attitude toward Vaidika philosophy, the Vaidika schools are not to be relegated to merely historical importance. To relegate Vaidika philosophy to the past, while claiming that only Western philosophy is a "modern", living and dynamic philosophical trend would be incorrect since there are many

brilliant Vaidika philosophers actively doing philosophy today. The Vaidika philosophical outlook is very much a living and vibrant and relevant tradition of thought, as is attested to by the presence of many living Vaidika philosophers today actively engaged in doing Vaidika philosophy in contemporary application. Such individuals as Dr. B.N.K. Sharma, Dr. S.M. Srinivasa Chari, Dr. O.B.L. Kapoor, and many others, are vivid proof of the fact that Vaidika philosophy is still a dynamic and active school of thought, completely engaged in scholarly and theological interface with the various world-views of our contemporary global culture. Indeed, this very book itself must be classified as a clear instance of Vaidika philosophy in contemporary application.

Differences Between Vaidika and Euro-American Philosophy

Generally speaking, the modern, post-Cartesian Euro-American approach to philosophic inquiry purportedly seeks to find an objective vantage point from which to analyze and properly order the many subjective perspectives

that constitute what is then termed "reality".[25] The Vaidika approach, by contrast, has sometimes been called a subjective attempt to find the ultimate objective.

While contemporary Western philosophy can be said to solely stress theory, dialectic and discursive deductive reasoning, the traditional philosophical trends in Asia have been said to put more of an emphasis on intuitive insight and introspection, intimately coupled with the modalities of logical reasoning. The Vaidika philosophical schools have never neglected the more holistic, interactive and experiential approaches to acquiring knowledge. While the Vaidika approach certainly employs the tools of systematic logical analysis to just as effective a degree as the Euro-American tradition has done, it also refuses to reject any aspect of the human experience as being inconsequential to the proper construction of a holistic philosophical world-view. One could say that Vaidika philosophers took Socrates' fundamental recommendation to "Know Thyself" (*gnothi seauton,* Gr.) and ran with it... and this, many centuries before Socrates was even born.

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[25] Additionally, of course, there are relativists, skeptics and deconstructionists in Western philosophy who - like Nāgārjuna millennia before - seek the total negation of anything that would be recognized as an objective reality.

The contrast between these two relatively distinct approaches becomes even more apparent when we look at the respective goals of each. For the contemporary Euro-American philosopher, knowledge is something that is usually considered to be divorced from the actual practical activities and behavior that the philosopher engages in. Truth is not lived and practiced. Rather it is merely a topic to be pondered. This is not the case for the traditional Vaidika philosopher, for whom philosophy necessarily serves as a pragmatic guide to everyday life, in addition to a cognitive road map to loftier metaphysical concerns. For most Vaidika philosophers, one's philosophy is something that is not merely thought, but is something that necessarily informs and guides the entirety of one's life, in addition to being thought.[26] Philosophy is not just theoretical…it is personal. Philosophy is also very much goal-oriented. For Vaidika philosophers, the philosophic enterprise is ultimately a spiritual endeavor, with personal enlightenment as the goal. This is a dimension of the philosophic life that has been consciously and eagerly abandoned by the majority of contemporary Euro-American philosophers from at least the 17th Century to the present day.

[26] One of the possible exceptions to this rule, it has been argued, might be the Nyāya school of philosophy.

While theory and practice are - ideally - meant to go hand-in-hand for the traditional Vaidika philosopher, this emphasis on a lived philosophy is not to be enjoyed at the expense of reason and the other tools that we in the post-modern West have come to associate with the philosophic enterprise. According to Mahanamabrata, a contemporary philosopher in the tradition of Jīva Gosvāmin, the task of the traditional Vaidika philosopher consists of "...formulating a rational and systematic account of the nature of God, man and the world, and the relation between God and man, God and the world, and man and the world, considered cosmologically, psychologically and epistemologically" (Mahanamabrata, 36). The most conspicuous feature of Vedic philosophy, then, seems to be an attempt to employ the very tools of rationality so familiar to the modern West to better gain a direct personal experience of the transrational, or the metaphysical.

This attempt at an integral approach on the part of Vaidika philosophers is in complete contradiction to the many hackneyed stereotypes of so-called "Eastern" philosophy painted by even some of the most respected academicians of both India and the West. Many have attempted to portray the Vaidika and Euro-American approaches to philosophic thought as being almost distinct opposites in

their respective natures and concerns. Even Raimundo Panikkar makes the interesting, yet highly problematic, statement that "Greece asks impersonally about the nature of knowledge. Greece wants to know knowledge. India asks with a personal and existential urge about the nature of the knower. India wants to know the knower." (119) This seems to me to be a very stereotypical and shallow explanation of the purported differences between these two venerable traditions, if for no other reason than that it is a plainly false statement.

While it might possibly be argued that "India" is ultimately seeking to know subjective reality, it would be entirely wrong to imply that "India" has pursued this experiential project to the utter detriment of also seeking to broaden the scope of knowledge for its very own sake, in addition to the sake of seeking the knower. As will become rapidly apparent in the proceeding chapters of the present work, "India" (which should actually read "Vedic philosophy") has developed - at various times or another in its millennia-old history - her own indigenous versions of many of the greatest intellectual developments attributed to European history. In the fields of logic, linguistics, mathematics, ontology, ethics, epistemology, philosophy of science, aesthetics, political and social philosophy, psychology,

metaphysics, and many other fields besides, the Vedic intellectual tradition has laid as much emphasis on the pursuit of scholarly excellence and intellectual progress as has the Euro-American intellectual tradition. Indeed, in some instances, it is easily arguable that the Vaidika tradition has even surpassed the Western philosophical tradition in intellectual development and philosophical discovery, as well as in being historically first to innovate such discoveries.

What makes Vaidika philosophy truly distinct from the post-Cartesian Euro-American philosophical tradition is not that it has an opposite emphasis or concern from the latter. Rather, Vaidika philosophy has shared many of the same foci, methodologies and developments that have been the hallmark of Euro-American philosophy. What makes "India" different from "Greece" is that the former did not artificially limit its foci, methodologies and developments to those of the latter. In addition to pursuing intellectual development for its own sake, the Vaidika philosophical tradition has always viewed the intellect as being merely a tool for the discovery of a higher faculty of the human person - that higher faculty being synonymous with the highest faculty - the element of consciousness per se, which is, as we shall soon see, purely transrational in its very nature.

Sapta-darśanas: The Seven Schools of Philosophy

This Vaidika approach to the philosophic enterprise became institutionally manifest in the seven primary traditional philosophies[27] that I call the *Sapta-darśanas*, or seven schools of philosophy. These schools include Sāṃkhya, Nyāya, Yoga, Vaiśeṣika, Vyākaraṇa, Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta.[28] United in their respect for, and acceptance of, the Vedic scriptural corpus as an authoritative vehicle for knowing the nature of reality, these various schools have historically emphasized different, if clearly overlapping, aspects of philosophical concern. Following is a brief overview of the positions and areas of concern of these

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[27] While many contemporary authors on Hinduism maintain that there are only six schools of philosophy (*ṣaḍ-darśanas*), I contend that there are actually seven traditional schools of philosophy (*sapta-darśanas*) with the addition of the very important, if often overlooked, Vyākaraṇa school.

[28] In addition to these "orthodox" Vaidika philosophical traditions, there are several other systems - both "orthodox" and "heterodox" - that have been recognized by both historians of philosophy, as well as within the history of Indian philosophy itself. In his *Sarva-darśana-saṃgraha,* for example, Mādhava Ācārya (a 14th century Advaita philosopher not to be confused with the Madhva who is the main philosopher of the Dvaita school) includes Cārvākas (atheist empiricists), Bauddhas (Buddhists) and Ārhata (Jains) among the non-Vedic schools; and Pāṇinīya and Śaiva among the Vedic. The differentiation between "orthodox" and "heterodox" rests upon acceptance of the Vedic revelation, with the latter rejecting the sanctity of the *Veda*.

seven schools.

Sāṃkhya

First systematized by the sage Kapila (ca. 1290 BCE),[29] Sāṃkhya is possibly the most ancient of these seven schools. Sāṃkhya thought represents "...that school or system which emphasizes the enumeration of principles, evolutes or emergents." (Larson, 2) It is a dualistic system in which the two distinct and formative principles of *puruṣa* (spirit) and *prakṛti* (matter) dominate the metaphysical landscape. As Surendranath Dasgupta explains the doctrine, "The Sāṃkhya philosophy as we have it now admits two principles, souls and *prakṛti*." (238) *Puruṣa* is the conscious principle that constitutes the multiple individual selves that inhabit and animate the bodies of every living thing. Being pure consciousness in and of itself, *puruṣa* (spirit) is eternal, incorruptible, self-illuminated and self-illuminating, unalterable, uncaused and all-pervasive by nature. Our individual conscious self transcends the limitations of the body, mind, senses and intellect, which are prakṛtic in nature. Its present connection with the force

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[29] Pañcaṣikha is known to have been a disciple of Āsuri, who may in turn have been identical with a disciple of Kapila mentioned in the *Mahābhārata*.

known as *prakṛti* (matter) is one of temporary, even if not easily surmountable, entrapment.

Prakṛti is the very antithesis of our spiritual selves, being by nature limited, changeable, enervating and corrupting. *Prakṛti*, calm, equipoised and unitary in its quiescent state, devolves from this state of equilibrium to a reality of vibrant multiplicity and diversity as a result of contact with *puruṣa*. As Larson explains this evolutionary process, "...it is by the association or proximity of these two diverse principles – *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* – that the world as we know it appears. Without this association or proximity of *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*, there would be no worldly existence or human experience." (Larson, 12) The goal of human life, according to the Sāṃkhya school, is for our individual *puruṣa* (spirit) to regain our state of freedom beyond the bondage of *prakṛti*'s limiting influence. These Sāṃkhyan themes are to be encountered continuously throughout the long history of both Vaidika and Indian philosophy.[30]

[30] We find the idea of *prakṛti/puruṣa* repeated, for example, in both the *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Yoga-sūtras* of Patañjali.

Nyāya

Nyāya[31] was founded by Akṣapāda Gautama (ca. 550 BCE) and represents the formal beginning of the Indian tradition of logic and epistemology. "The Nyāya school", says Jai Singh, "can, in a way, be said to be the founder of Indian epistemology. Most of the other Indian theories of knowledge are in some or the other way influenced by Nyāya logic and epistemology." (ix) Generally speaking, the objective of the Nyāya school is to create a "concrete method of discriminating valid knowledge from invalid..." (Tigunait, 69), as well as truth from falsehood, using the arsenal of logic and discursive reasoning. Nyāya employs a very systematic regime of logic formulae involving sixteen different divisions of philosophical concerns, goals and means. These divisions, known as the *padārthas*, are outlined in the following chart:

[31] This school of philosophy is known in the philosophical texts by a very wide variety of names, *ānvikṣikī*, *tarka-śāstra*, *ñyāya-vistāra*, *ñyāya-darśana*, *hetu-vidyā*, *hetu-śāstra*, *vāda-vidyā*, and *pramāṇa-śāstra* being only several of the more important ones.

Nyāya Padārthas

pramāṇa:	the valid sources of knowledge.
prameya:	the proper object of knowledge.
saṃśaya:	the state of doubt or uncertainty.
prayojana:	the aim of the philosophical endeavor.
dṛṣṭānta:	the example.
siddhānta:	the perfect conclusion.
avayava:	the constituents of inference.
tarka:	hypothetical arguments.
nirṇaya:	conclusion.
bādha:	discussion.
jalpa:	discursive wrangling.
vitaṇḍā:	irrational arguments.
hetvābāsa:	specious reasoning.
chala:	unfair reply.
jāti:	a generality based upon a false analogy.
nigrahasthāna:	the grounds for defeat.

As with the other seven schools of the classical Vaidika tradition, the chosen means of acquiring truth that we find in the Nyāya system are not considered ends in and of themselves, but are merely tools for achieving the final goal of all Vedic philosophical systems: liberation from the binding grips of *saṃsāra* (the cycle of birth and death).

Yoga

Yoga, our next school under discussion, is Vaidika philosophical thought in overtly practical application. It is a philosophy whose chief aim is to reunite the presently alienated individual soul (*ātman*) with the Absolute (Brahman). Though evidence of this school of thought can be traced back at least as far as the early Harappan/Indus Valley civilization,[32] the name most clearly associated with this path is Patañjali, the author of the famed *Yoga-sūtras*

[32] Among the earliest images that we have from ancient Aryavarta civilization are Harappan seals from as early as 2,100-1750 B.C.E. depicting people seated in what clearly appears to be *padmāsana*, or the easily recognizable "lotus pose", found in *haṭha-yoga*. The Paśupati image, which depicts a very early form of Śiva, is especially well-known. The Paśupati image is, in turn, remarkably similar in appearance to the antlered figure shown on Plate A of the famous Gundestrup cauldron of 1st century BCE Danish Celtic origin, showing the truly geographically expansive nature of both Yoga and Vedic influence.

(ca. 150 B C E).[33] In 1:2 of his *sūtras*, Patañjali defines the goal of Yoga as *citta-vṛtti nirodhaḥ*, or "The restriction of the modifications of the mind". In addition to the necessary acquisition of knowledge that is stressed in other schools of Vaidika philosophy, the classical Yoga system of Patañjali stresses eight limbs (*aṣṭānga*), or techniques, that lead their practitioners toward the goal of perfection. These eight limbs include:

1) *Yama*: or the five negative moral proscriptions; i.e.

    non-violence
    truthfulness
    non-stealing
    Sexual continence
    non-possessiveness

2) *Niyama*: or the five positive observances of:

    purity
    contentment
    austerity
    study
    devotion to God

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[33] While Patañjali's work represents the earliest extant work on Classical Aṣṭānga Yoga, Patañjali is by no means the originator of this system. The earlier works on Yoga that we know where written by Hiraṇyagarbha and Jaigīṣavya are presently lost. Jaigīṣavya is mentioned in the *Mahābhārata*, II, 21, 26 and the *Harivaṃśa*, 952, thus establishing that he predated Patañjali by at least many centuries if not several millennia.

3) *Āsana*: or physical postures leading to psycho-physical integration and which prepare the body for the long periods of meditation necessary for liberation.

4) *Prāṇāyāma:* various breathing exercises that give one control over *prāṇa,* the vital life energy.

5) *Pratyāhāra*: control and interiorization of the senses.

6) *Dhāraṇā*: focused concentration of the mind's attention.

7) *Dhyāna*: meditation proper.

8) *Samādhi*: or absorption of the *yogin*'s individual consciousness in the reality of the Supreme.[34]

[34] The most thoroughly comprehensive treatment of the philosophy, history and practical discipline of Yoga to date is the massive encyclopedic work, "*The Yoga Tradition: Its History, Literature, Philosophy and Practice*", by Dr. Georg Feuerstein. I would highly recommend this very detailed and well-researched work for further information on the various strands of Yoga philosophy.

Vaiśeṣika

Founded by the sage Kaṇāda (ca. 550 BCE), the school of Vaiśeṣika has been called the physics of India[35]. The term *vaiśeṣika* itself is a reference to the very attributiveness that is the main concern of this school. It is, generally speaking, an attempt to categorize the various components of reality into a coherent system. The goal of Vaiśeṣika is "...real knowledge, produced by special excellence of *dharma*, of the characteristic features of the categories of substance (*dravya*), quality (*guṇa*), class concept (*sāmānya*), particularity (*viśeṣa*), and inherence (*samavāya*)." (Dasgupta, 285) Over time, Vaiśeṣika became very closely aligned with the Nyāya school to the point of becoming practically indistinguishable from it.

Vyākaraṇa

Vyākaraṇa, the Vedic school of Sanskrit grammar, is primarily concerned with how sounds, words, sentences and other components of Sanskrit grammar convey meaning, as well as with other functions of language. Like other

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[35] Among many others, this comparison has been made by S. Radhakrishnan in his *Indian Philosophy*.

schools of Vedic thought, the Vyākaraṇa school teaches that the Absolute is manifest in the form of *mantra*, or the sound formulations of the *Vedas*. This is an idea that is in concert with the teachings of the *Vedas* themselves. In the *Ṛg-veda*, for example, we find many instances of glorification of Vāc, the goddess of speech.[36] Who the founder of this school is remains unknown. Though the most celebrated scholars of this school are Yāska (ca. 1270 B.C.E.) and Pāṇini (circa 350 B.C.E.), they themselves report the existence of several grammarian authorities who preceded them.[37]

Pūrva Mīmāṃsā

The Mīmāṃsā philosophy seeks to establish a methodology through which the teachings of the *Vedas* - the revealed scriptures of the Vaidika religion - can be understood. As stated by Chandradhar Sharma: "The aim of the Mīmāṃsā is to supply the principles according to which the Vedic texts are to be interpreted and to provide philosophical justification for the views contained therein." (212) The

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[36] See, for example, *Ṛg-veda* 10.114.8.

[37] The earliest historical Vyākaraṇa philosopher was Sākalya, the author of the *Padapāṭha* of the *Ṛg-veda*, who is mentioned by Pāṇini.

primary focus of this exegetical school is the *karma-kaṇḍa* section of the Vedic literature, or the pre-Upaniṣadic literature, comprised of the *Saṃhitas*, *Brāhmaṇas* and *Āraṇyakas*, dealing with the nature of works, action and sacrifice. *Karma-kaṇḍa* focuses on the science of Vedic sacrifice as a means of both material prosperity, as well as spiritual progress. This school is also known as the Pūrva (earlier) Mīmāṃsā in order to differentiate it from the Uttara (later) Mīmāṃsā, or Vedānta. As Francis Clooney and others have pointed out, the two schools of Pūrva and Uttara Mīmāṃsā are closely linked:

> The scope of interest of some scholars in the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā is suggested by the way in which the system is named – that system of investigation which is prior (pūrva) to the more interesting Uttara Mīmāṃsā, the Vedānta. Attention given to the Pūrva Mīmāṃsākas has often been filtered through the Vedānta's evaluation of ritual action, in particular through Śaṅkara's bifurcation of knowledge and ritual. Too often the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā has appeared as a kind of ritualistic, works-oriented foil to the higher path of knowledge. This caricature obscures not only the (obvious and acknowledged) debt of the Vedāntin thinkers to the Mīmāṃsā, but also confuses performance of rituals with the Mīmāṃsā explanation of why rituals are performed.

(Clooney, 25)

Both the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā and the Uttara Mīmāṃsā schools of Vedic philosophy are traditionally considered to be natural and sequential extensions of one another.[38] There is also a continuity in Mīmāṃsā literature, with the *Pūrvamīmāṃsā-sūtras* (in 12 *adhyāyas*) of Jaimini representing the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā school; the *Devatamīmāṃsā-sūtras* (in 4 *adhyāyas*) of Kāśakṛtsna serving as a bridge between both schools; and the *Brahma-sūtras* (in 4 *adhyāyas*) of Vyāsa serving as the textual foundation for the school of Uttara Mīmāṃsā.

The Schools of Vedānta

The name by which the latter school is more widely known is Vedānta.[39] It is no exaggeration to say that Vedānta has

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[38] Rāmānuja, for example, strongly holds that one must be proficient in the teachings of Mīmāṃsā before one can seriously begin the study of Vedānta. Srinivasachari writes in his classic work *The Philosophy of Viśiṣṭādvaita*, "Rāmānuja considers the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā philosophy of karman or duty as a necessary step to the Uttara Mīmāṃsā philosophy of Brahman." (*xxxi*)

[39] The term Vedānta is comprised of two words: 1) *veda*, and 2) *anta*. "*Veda*" refers both to the scripture known as the *Veda*, as well as to knowledge generally. "*Anta*" means both the sequential end, as well as the culmination. Thus, Vedānta means the end/culmination of *śruti*/knowledge.

clearly been the most important and influential school in at least the last twelve centuries of the history of Indian philosophy. Whereas for the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā school, the efficacy of ritual activities are of primary religious value, the Vedānta school holds that the *jñāna-kaṇḍa*, or knowledge portion of the *Vedas*, are of primary spiritual interest. Julius Lipner describes the difference in emphasis between the Vedānta school and Pūrva Mīmāṃsā in the following way:

> The Vedāntins for their part had a totally different perspective on reality. They regarded the ethic underlying sacrifice-fruit concern of the Pūrva-mimāṃsakas as a morally self-centered one, and valuable only as a stepping-stone to its own transcending. It was only after an individual had had his fill of this ego-centric ethic and become weary of the potentially endless stream of physical rebirth (*saṃsāra*) in which it enmeshed him that he was prepared to make the sacrifice that really mattered - that of his ego - and adopt a Brahman-centered way of life.
>
> (Lipner, 10)

Vedānta is predicated upon the teachings of three sacred works, known collectively as the *Prasthānatraya*.[40] These

[40] Something not widely known is that most of the major Vedānta commentators also did commentaries on the *Viṣṇu-sahasra-nāma*, or

are:

a) The terse philosophical aphorisms written by Bādarāyaṇa Vyāsa known as the *Brahma-sūtras*.
b) The famous philosophical dialogue between Kṛṣṇa and His disciple Arjuna, known as the *Bhagavad-gītā*, or "Song of God".
c) The collection of philosophical scriptures known as the ancient *Upaniṣads*.[41]

Thousand Names of Viṣṇu, thus making this work a fourth *prasthāna* text, so to speak.

[41] The following eleven *Upani¬ads* are considered to be the most philosophically authoritative: *Īśa, Kena, Kaṭha, Praśna, Muṇḍaka, Maṇdukya, Taittirīya, Aitareya, Chandogya, Bṛhad-āraṇyaka* and *Śvetaśvatara*. However, in the *Muktikopaniṣad*, verses 30-39, there is a description of 108 *Upani¬ads*. They are as follows:

(1) Īśopaniṣad, (2) Kenopaniṣad, (3) Kaṭhopaniṣad, (4) Praśnopaniṣad, (5) Muṇḍakopaniṣad, (6) Maṇḍukyopaniṣad, (7) Taittirīyopaniṣad, (8) Aitareyopaniṣad, (9) Chandogyopaniṣad, (10) Bṛhad-āraṇyakopaniṣad, (11) Brahmopaniṣad, (12) Kaivalyopaniṣad, (13) Jabalopaniṣad, (14) Śvetaśvataropaniṣad, (15) Haṃsopaniṣad, (16) Aruneyopaniṣad, (17) Garbhopaniṣad, (18) Nārāyaṇopaniṣad, (19) Paramahaṃsopaniṣad, (20) Amṛta-bindupaniṣad, (21) Nada-bindupaniṣad, (22) Siropaniṣad, (23) Athārva-śikhopaniṣad, (24) Maitrayany-upaniṣad, (25) Kausitaky-upaniṣad, (26) Bṛhaj-jabalopaniṣad, (27) Nṛṣimha-tapanīyopaniṣad, (28) Kalāgni-rudropaniṣad, (29) Maitreyī-upaniṣad, (30) Subalopaniṣad, (31) Kṣurikopaniṣad, (32) Mantrikopaniṣad, (33) Sarva-saropaniṣad, (34) Niralambopaniṣad, (35) Suka-rahasyopaniṣad, (36) Vajra-sucikopaniṣad, (37) Tejo-bindupaniṣad, (38) Nada-bindupaniṣad, (39) Dhyāna-bindupaniṣad, (40) Brahma-vidyopaniṣad, (41) Yoga-tattvopaniṣad, (42) Ātma-bodhopaniṣad, (43) Nārada-parivrajakopaniṣad, (44) Trisikhy-upaniṣad, (45) Sītopaniṣad, (46) Yoga-cuḍamany-upaniṣad, (47) Nirvāṇopaniṣad, (48) Maṇḍala-

For the most part, the history of Vedānta consists of a commentarial tradition centered on these works, the *Brahma-sūtras* being the main work explicated. The Vedānta school is predicated upon the acceptance of three Reals (*tattvas*), or fundamental ontological categories, that all perceptual and conceptual reality ultimately devolves into. These three ontological Reals are:

1. Brahman - the Absolute.
2. Ātman - individual conscious entities.

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brahmanopaniṣad, (49) Dakṣina-murty-upaniṣad, (50) Sarabhopaniṣad, (51) Skandopaniṣad, (52) Māhānārāyaṇopaniṣad, (53) Advaya-tārakopaniṣad, (54) Rāma-rahasyopaniṣad, (55) Rāma-tapany-upaniṣad, (56) Vasudevopaniṣad, (57) Mudgalopaniṣad, (58) Sandilyopaniṣad, (59) Paingalopaniṣad, (60) Bhikṣupaniṣad, (61) Mahad-upaniṣad, (62) Sarirakopaniṣad, (63) Yoga-sikhopaniṣad, (64) Turiyatitopaniṣad, (65) Sannyasopaniṣad, (66) Paramahamsa-parivrajakopaniṣad, (67) Malikopaniṣad, (68) Avyaktopaniṣad, (69) Ekaksaropaniṣad, (70) Purnopaniṣad, (71) Suryopaniṣad, (72) Akṣy-upaniṣad, (73) Adhyatmopaniṣad, (74) Kundikopaniṣad, (75) Savitry-upaniṣad, (76) Atmopaniṣad, (77) Pasupatopaniṣad, (78) Param-brahmopaniṣad, (79) Avadhutopaniṣad, (80) Tripuratapanopaniṣad, (81) Devy-upaniṣad, (82) Tripuropaniṣad, (83) Katha-rudropaniṣad, (84) Bhavanopaniṣad, (85) Hrdayopaniṣad, (86) Yoga-kundaliny-upaniṣad, (87) Bhasmopaniṣad, (88) Rudraksopaniṣad, (89) Ganopaniṣad, (90) Darsanopaniṣad, (91) Tara-saropaniṣad, (92) Maha-vakyopaniṣad, (93) Panca-brahmopaniṣad, (94) Pranagni-hotropaniṣad, (95) Gopala-tapany-upaniṣad, (96) Krṣnopaniṣad, (97) Yajnavalkyopaniṣad, (98) Varahopaniṣad, (99) Satyayany-upaniṣad, (100) Hayagrivopaniṣad, (101) Dattatreyopaniṣad, (102) Garudopaniṣad, (103) Kaly-upaniṣad, (104) Jabaly-upaniṣad, (105) Saubhagyopaniṣad, (106) Sarasvati-rahasyopaniṣad, (107) Bahvrcopaniṣad and (108) Muktikopaniṣad.

3. Jagat - materiality.

Everything that constitutes reality, everything that is either perceivable or conceivable, ultimately can be reduced to one – and only one – or another of these three fundamental categories of existence. Every material thing that we see around us, whether a chair, a car, a house, or even our own bodies, is comprised of insentient matter, and can thus be reduced to Jagat. The spark of consciousness that animates any living being, whether human, plant, animal, or a god, is ultimately Ātman. Finally, the highest ontological Real that underlies all experiential reality, giving reality its meaning and purpose, is Brahman, or God.

While all Vedānta philosophers are in general agreement as to this tripartite makeup of reality as we know it, there has been, throughout the long history of Vedānta, a great deal of contention as to what constitutes the precise nature of the relationship of these three *tattvas* (Reals).

Pre-Śaṃkaran *Brahma-sūtra* Commentators

It is well established that the Vedāntic commentarial tradition stretches back into the dating-resistant mists of Indian historical antiquity. Almost all of the ancient, pre-

Śaṃkaran (circa 8-9th Centuries) commentaries (*bhāṣyas*) are, unfortunately, no longer extant. In many cases, however, we at least know of the names of the authors of many of these ancient works because they are often mentioned, and even cited, by later Vedāntic commentators. In his *Vedārtha-saṃgraha* (130), for example, Rāmānuja (1017-1137 C.E.) mentions the names of six previous teachers of Vedānta who are said to have expounded the philosophy of Viśiṣṭādvaita (Qualified Non-dualism). These individuals are:

1. Bodhāyana
2. Taṅka
3. Dramiḍa
4. Guhadeva (1st century B.C.E.?)
5. Kapardi
6. Bhāruci

Other than the names of these six individual Vedānta philosophers, we currently possess only very scant information about the more important details of their lives, including their dates.

Little is known about the dates of Bodhāyana, Taṅka, Dramiḍa, and Karpadi. We do, however, know something about the works ascribed to them. Bodhāyana is supposed

to have written an extensive *vṛtti* on both the Pūrva and Uttara Mīmāṃsās, as well as a possible commentary on the *Bhagavad-gītā*. While it was previously believed that all of these works by Bodhāyana were lost, Vedic researcher Vishal Agarwal reports that manuscripts of his *Brahma-sūtras* commentary may have been recently discovered.[42] It is known that Taṅka wrote commentaries on both the *Chhandogya-upaniṣad* and the *Brahma-sūtras*. Dramiḍa is credited with writing commentaries on the *Brahma-sūtras*, *Chhandogya-upaniṣad* and *Māṇḍūkya-upaniṣad*. Karpadi wrote several commentaries on the texts of the *Taittirīya* (*Apastamba*) recension of the *Kṛṣṇa-yajurveda*. If Guhadeva is possibly synonymous with the Vedāntist known as Guhasvāmin, then it is possible that he flourished during the first century B.C.E. Commentaries on both the *Apastamba Śrautasūtra* and the *Taittarīya Āraṇyaka* are attributed to him. Medhatithi (ca. 950 C.E.) is known to have quoted Bhāruci, thus placing him clearly no later than the ninth century. Bhāruci wrote commentaries on both the *Manava-dharma-śāstra*, as well as the *Viṣṇu-dharma-śāstra*.[43]

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[42] At least one manuscript is listed as existing in the collection of the Saradā Maṭha of Sringeri, but has yet to be translated.

[43] For this section of my work detailing the history of the pre-Śaṃkaran commentators, I am indebted to Vishal Agarwal of the Uni-

Extant Vedāntic Commentators

The earliest extant *bhāṣya*, or commentary, is that written by the *ācārya* Śaṃkara (ca. 788-820 C.E.)[44]. Based upon a metaphysical system he called Advaita, Śaṃkara's is a radically monistic outlook. According to Śaṃkara, reality consists of only one unitary principle: Brahman, which is pure, eternal and perfect consciousness. Being an undifferentiated reality, anything which is considered to be either conceptually or perceptually distinct from this Absolute - including the phenomenal world, the beings inhabiting that world, and the multifarious experiences of those beings - is perceived as such only due to illusion (*māyā*) on the part of the observer. This ultimate reality is "...that state which *is* when all subject/object distinctions are obliterated" (Deutsch, 9). What will be considered crucially significant for later Indian philosophers is that, on Śaṃkara's account, this thorough obliteration of all cognitive categories includes the complete eradication of any sense of subjective individuality and individuated consciousness. For

versity of Minnesota for his inestimable groundbreaking research. His as yet unpublished manuscript, from which I derived the bulk of my information on these ancient Vedanta commentators, is titled *The Ancient Commentators of the Prasthana Trayi*.

[44] The traditionally accepted dates for Śaṃkara are ca. 200-168 B.C.E.

Śaṃkara, even the sense of personhood is an illusion.

The original Vedānta school of Bādarāyaṇa Vyāsa teaches that the individual sentient being is, in his/her essential identity, the eternal self, or *ātman*. The *Upaniṣads* inform us that, like Brahman (God), *ātman* is also of the nature of pure consciousness, being eternal, full of bliss and thoroughly perfect in its ontological makeup. These marked similarities between Brahman and *ātman* being the case, Śaṃkara later argued, the nature and identity of both *ātman* and Brahman must be non-different. The so-called individual being is ultimately the universal Brahman itself, temporarily under the illusion that she has an identity differentiated from Brahman. Since individual living beings are viewed by Advaita Vedāntists as being wholly non-different from the Absolute, this concept of non-distinction necessarily leads to the eradication of any notion of individuality or separateness, both on the part of humans, as well as on the part of God. Thus in Śaṃkara's system, the Absolute is rendered thoroughly devoid of personality and all the qualitative attributiveness that any meaningful notion of personhood necessarily entails.

This non-dualistic account of Vedānta philosophy was not

left unchallenged by post-Śaṃkaran thinkers. Writing their own, theistic, *bhāṣyas* (commentaries) on the *Brahma-sūtras*, several later philosophers would reveal the inherent inconsistencies in Śaṃkara's reasoning. These thinkers were almost exclusively followers of the Vaiṣṇava (theistic and personalistic) tradition of the Vaidika world-view. Among the first of these was Rāmānuja (1017-1137 C.E.), the most important philosopher of the Śrī Vaiṣṇava branch of the Vaiṣṇava tradition and the most well known proponent of the Viśiṣṭādvaita school of Vedānta. Rāmānuja's famed *Śrī-bhāṣya* commentary contains many arguments specifically directed at refuting the conclusions of Śaṃkara.

Taking aim directly at Śaṃkara's view that the individual *ātman* is thoroughly non-different from universal Brahman, Rāmānuja argued that this view leads to a very fundamental logical contradiction. Rendered in a propositional format, Śaṃkara makes the following claims:

1. Brahman: is perfect, self-sufficient, unconditioned, transcends both time and space, and is not subject to any state of subordination to illusion.

2. The individual self, *ātman*, is in every manner non-different from Brahman, and thus shares in all the above feature of Brahman.

3. If two seemingly separate beings are actually non-different in every perceivable and conceivable way, including occupying the same locus in both time and space, then they are the same being.

4. *Ātman* and Brahman are non-different in every perceivable and conceivable way.

5. Therefore, *ātman* is Brahman.

6. *Ātman*, however, is not currently aware of her true state as being non-different from Brahman due to being temporarily in a state of subordi nation to illusion.

These are fundamental propositions that any Advaitin would support. As Rāmānuja would point out, however, this argument contains a crucial flaw. The last proposition (6) is directly contradicted by the first. The logical causal-

ity of the Advaitin argument thus leads to a necessary conclusion:

7. Therefore, Brahman is currently under a state of imposed illusion.

If Brahman is not subject to illusion, and if *ātman* is in fact Brahman in every respect, then how is it that *ātman* can have fallen prey at all to an illusion that logically cannot have overtaken it? In alternative language, if the individual soul is indeed God in every respect, and if this individual soul finds itself presently subject to the bewildering effects of *māyā* (illusion), then is *māyā* - the limiting factor - not subjugating God, which is by nature unconditioned? Would this not, Rāmānuja asks, then lead one quite naturally to conclude that *māyā* - illusion - is ontologically superior to Brahman, since it has the power to subjugate Brahman? That which subjugates is necessarily superior to that which it subjugates. That is certainly a proposition which neither an Advaitin nor a Vaiṣṇava would ever wish to admit.[45]

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[45] Six centuries later, Jīva Gosvāmin would strongly concur with Rāmānuja's critique of Śaṃkara's argument. In the 35th *anuccheda* of his *Tattva-saṃdarbha*, Jīva makes the following observation: "It is thus erroneous to contend that one and the same Brahman, pure consciousness itself, is simultaneously the embodiment of knowledge, as it

Rāmānuja was followed by several other theistic philosophers who also took critical aim at Śaṃkara's Advaita system. These include (among many others): Niṃbārka (d. 1162), who taught a Vedāntic system known as Dvaitādvaita (duality-in-unity), Madhva (1238-1317), the founder of Dvaita (dualism), Vedānta Deśika (a later follower of Rāmānuja's Viśiṣṭādvaita; born 1268),[46] Vallabha (1473-1531), who taught Śuddhādvaita (pure non-dualism), and the subject of this book, Jīva Gosvāmin (1513-1598), who upheld the philosophy of Acintya-bhedābhedavāda (inconceivable simultaneous difference and identity).[47]

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functions as the substratum of *māyā*, as well as overpowered by ignorance, falling under the sway of that *māyā*. In fact, this is the very sense in which the distinction between *īśvara* [God] and *jīva* [individual soul] is to be understood. It thus follows that, due to the respective differences in their natural capacities, the two (i.e., *īśvara* and *jīva*) are essentially distinct."

Yarhy eva yad ekaṃ cidrūpaṃ brahma māyāśrayatābalitaṃ vidyāmayaṃ tarhy eva tanmāyāviṣayatāpannam avidyāparibhūtaṃ cety ayuktam iti jīveśvaravibhāgo 'vagataḥ/tataś ca svarūpasāmarthyavailakṣaṇyena tad dvitayaṃ mitho vilakṣaṇasvarūpam evety āgatam//

[46] Vedānta Deśika's two most important works on epistemology are: *Nyāya-pariśuddhi* and *Tattva-muktākalāpa*.

[47] For further readings on these Vaiṣṇava philosophers, see the following works: B.N.K. Sharma's three volume work *The Philosophy of Śrī Madhvācarya*, Geeta Khurana's *The Theology of Niṃbārka* and Mahanamabrata's *Vaiṣṇava Vedānta*, which deals specifically with Jīva's

The Caitanya Tradition

It is difficult to understand Jīva - the philosopher - without knowing about the religious context in which his ideas were formulated. Jīva was a follower of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu (1486-1533), the great Bengali Vaiṣṇava saint who founded the movement that much later came to be known as Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism[48], or Bengali Vaiṣṇavism. Caitanya represents one of Bengal's most important Vaiṣṇava saints and thinkers.

Despite this fact, Vaiṣṇavism as a religious, cultural and philosophical phenomenon per se had existed in Bengal since at least the 4th century C. E., and most likely much

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Vedāntic thought. *The Bhakti Schools of Vedānta*, by Svāmi Taspasyānanda is also a valuable work that offers synopses of the thought of several Vaiṣṇava Vedāntists.

[48] One rather unique and highly controversial modern offshoot of this sect is probably better known in the Western world as the Hare Krishna movement, or "ISKCON", founded by Bhaktivedānta Svāmi. Though, as Jan Brzezinski (*Journal of Vaiṣṇava Studies*, Vol. 5, no. 1), Neal Delmonico and many other scholars of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism have recently pointed out, this latter day incarnation of Caitanya's movement is without doubt much more of a modern alteration than anything resembling a faithful representation of orthodox Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava thought and practice. For a further elaboration of the Hare Krishna phenomenon, see my paper entitled "*The Heart Transplant That Failed: The History of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism in America*".

earlier than this.[49] In his *Vaiṣṇavism in Bengal: 1486-1900*, Ramakanta Chakraborty paints a picture of a pre-Caitanya Bengal, replete with an ancient and well-developed Vaiṣṇava heritage derived mainly from the Southern Śrī Vaiṣṇava tradition of the Āḷvārs and Rāmānuja:

> In Bengal, Vaiṣṇavism assumed a tangible shape during the twelfth century, which was the century of Sena rule. The pristine *bhakti* movement had already been set on a strong basis in the Deccan by Ācārya Rāmānuja (d. 1137 A.D.), the celebrated author of Śrībhāṣya and the organizer of a party of seventy-four spiritual leaders who preached Viśiṣṭādvaitavāda. The early Sena rulers came to Bengal from Canara country. Possibly with them came *bhakti* as a philosophical principle and as a way of life. The Śri Vaiṣṇava influence is faintly discernable in the importance attached to the goddess Lakṣmī or Kamalā in the inscriptions of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. A synthesis of the *vyūha* and *avatāra* doctrines might also have been effected in the twelfth century.
>
> (Chakraborty, 6)

[49] In this regard, A. N. Chatterjee states: “There is enough epigraphic, iconographic and literary evidence to show the prevalence of Vaiṣṇavism in Bengal and Orissa long before the advent of Caitanya. The Sununia rock-inscription and the Baigrām copper plate inscription (ca. A.D. 447 – 48) stand testimony to Viṣṇu worship in ancient Bengal.” (103)

Thus, the Bengali soil that Caitanya would find himself born upon was already quite fertile with the powerful devotional sentiments of the *bhakti* movement, and of the Śrī Vaiṣṇava tradition in particular.

Born in the city of Navadvīpa (approximately ninety miles north of present-day Kolkata), Bengal, Caitanya is reported by the early hagiographic materials to have exhibited the exalted qualities of a saint even from the days of his very early youth[50]. An apparently brilliant scholar and charismatic mystic, Caitanya is said to have vanquished aged scholars in debate and performed miraculous feats even as a child. At the age of seventeen, Caitanya traveled to Gayā to perform the traditional *śrāddha* ceremony for his father's funeral. It was here where he met his spiritual preceptor, the Vaiṣṇava *ācārya* (preceptor) Īśvara Puri. This initial meeting mysteriously transformed Caitanya from a traditional scholar engaged in making a living by teaching logic and grammar, to an ecstatic dynamo of mystical outpourings of almost unparalleled historic proportions. Having taken formal *dikṣā* (spiritual initiation) from Īśvara Puri,

[50] For further details on the early life of Caitanya, please refer to the hagiographical account: *Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata* of Vṛndāvana Dāsa Ṭhākura.

Caitanya then returned to Navadvīpa to begin his historic mission of preaching his own idiosyncratic brand of Vaiṣṇava *bhakti* (devotion) throughout the length and breath of India.

The ideological focus and institutional *raison d'être* of the later Gauḍīya movement would become largely dependent upon, and fueled by, the ecstatic devotional fervor and uncompromisingly Vaiṣṇava ethic personified by the very life of Caitanya. So important was the very personhood of Caitanya to the formulation of this North Indian religious movement that even the not unbiased Christian missionary, Melville Kennedy, felt compelled in 1925 to paint the following positive portrait of Caitanya as the founder of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism:

> In the potent influence emanating from Chaitanya's personality we have already seen the real origin of the sect. The materials, indeed, were not of his making; they had existed for generations in Bengal in the persons of Vaishnava adherents. But his was the spirit that took these elements of common faith and fused them in the fire of his own burning devotion, until they came out a new creation - a living movement full of his own energy. Others took advantage and organised what the master spirit had evolved, and gave it a form by which to perpetuate itself.

> But nothing in all the subsequent years of the movement had been able to efface the stamp put upon it in its origin by the personality of Chaitanya.
>
> (52)

What is even more remarkable is that the founder of the Gauḍīya tradition was to make such an overwhelming impact upon his followers in the very scant lifespan of only 48 years. In that short period of time, however, Caitanya had originated and successfully passed on to his disciples his own unique expression of the ancient Vaiṣṇava world-view and philosophical system.

Radical Theocentrism as a *Dei Gratia* System of Yoga

Caitanya had re-taught what was actually an ancient and perennial religio-philosophical system of monotheistic devotion found throughout the history of Vaiṣṇavism that I have termed Radical Theocentrism. This devotional world-view upholds the concept that all reality - the entire realm of living beings, as well as the totality of non-sentient matter - is ontologically dependent upon the Absolute, God, as their ultimate originating source, sustainer of being, and ultimate object of destined repose. Further, ultimate human fulfillment, satisfaction, and liberation consists in a

total and radical self-surrender of the individual soul's interests, agency, and will to the greater will of this Absolute. For all Vaiṣṇavas, this Absolute is not merely the dry and amorphous Brahman of the Advaitins, nor the anthropomorphic concept of divinity so intricately laid out in Western Abrahamic theological speculation, but is ultimately Brahman in the form of a perfectly personal and omnicompetent Supreme Being – the Supreme Personality. This systematic process of *dei gratia* self-surrender is considered by Vaiṣṇavas to be nothing less than the original and highest form of Yoga, as well as the ultimate fulfillment of the Yoga process, and is variously termed *prapatti*, *saraṇāgati, upāsanā*, and *ātma-nivedana*.[51]

The notion of the complete self-surrender of the individual soul to the mercy of a personal and infinitely loving Brahman is certainly not a concept that Caitanya innovated.

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[51] Even with the obvious acknowledgement of some key cultural distinctions, many of the basic core tenets of Vaiṣṇava Radical Theocentrism can be clearly observed in the outlook of the later Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. St. Augustine, for example, writes in his *De Civitate Dei* (The City of God), "*verus philosophus est amator dei*" - "The true philosopher is the lover of God". In the Indian context, the clear influence of Vedic Radical Theocentrism can be observed in the Vaidika Śaiva Siddhānta tradition, as well as in the concept of *Tathāgata-garbha* tradition of Mahāyana Buddhism. As far east as Japan, a form of Radical Theocentrism is also seen in the Amitabha devotion of the Pureland sect of Buddhism.

Self-surrender, or *prapatti*, or Radical Theocentrism, as the surest means to *mokṣa* was taught four-hundred years earlier than Caitanya by Rāmānuja; by the ecstatic Vaiṣṇava saints known as the Āḷvārs several hundred years[52] before even Rāmānaja; and arguably as far back as the richly devotional hymns of the *Ṛg-veda* (ca. 3,800 B.C.E.). The very word *ṛg* in the compound name *Ṛg-veda* is derived from the word *ṛc* after euphonic modification. Its literal meaning is "praise". Thus, as far back as Vaidika (Hindu) literature extends historically, strong traces of devotion (*bhakti*) can be observed throughout.[53]

In addition to the importance of the concept of *prapatti*, Vaiṣṇavism also stresses the overarching importance of Divine grace in achieving God-realization and liberation. The importance of God's grace in knowing the nature of God is found throughout the vast literature of the Vaidika tradition. In the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, for example, it states:

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[52] Two distinct periods are given for these twelve historic figures. Traditional Vaidika scholars say they lived between 4203-2706 B.C.E. Contemporary Euro-American scholars, however, feel they flourished between the 6th and 8th centuries C.E.

[53] See Rāmānuja's *Śaraṇāgati-gadya*; *The Tamil Veda*, by Vasudha Narayanan and John Carman; and *Vaiṣṇavism: Its Philosophy, Theology and Religious Discipline*, by S.M. Srinivasa Chari, for further elaboration on the ancient tradition of what I call Radical Theocentrism.

nāyamātmā pravacanena labhyo
na medhyā na bahunā śrutena
yamevaiṣya vṛṇute tena labhyas
tasyaiṣa ātmā vivṛṇute tanūṃ svām

"This *ātman* cannot be gained by the study of the *Veda*, nor by thought, nor by much hearing; only whom God chooses, by him is He obtained; to him this *ātman* reveals its own form."

For all Vaiṣṇavas, the Supreme Being, and thus the proper object of devotion, is none other than Nārāyaṇa/Viṣṇu in one or another of His myriad Divine forms, whether that form be Nārāyana Himself, or one of His many incarnations (*avatāras*), such as Kṛṣṇa, Rāma or Nṛsiṃhadeva, or one of His iconic (*arcā*) forms, such as Vekaṭeśvara or Śrī Raṅganātha.[54] Moreover, Yoga, in its original and unaltered form, is designed to be devotional in nature and consists of devotional meditation on God in the form of Śrī

[54] Generally speaking, five forms of the Absolute are accepted in the Vaiṣṇava tradition. These include: 1) *para*, the transcendent Supreme; 2) *vyūha*, the secondary expansions of the original Absolute; 3) *vibhava*, or the incarnations of the Absolute on earth; 4) *antaryāmin*, God residing as the Self of each individual self; and 5) *arcā*, or the deity image.

Viṣṇu.[55] For Caitanya and his followers, this Supreme Being exists very specifically in the *forma dei* of Kṛṣṇa, the cowherd of Vṛndāvana and the Bhagavān (Lord) of the famous *Bhagavad-gītā*.

Indeed, the most pronounced distinguishing element between Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism versus most other schools of Vaiṣṇava thought is on the former's insistence that Kṛṣṇa takes ontological precedence over Viṣṇu. Remarkably, for the Gauḍīyas, Kṛṣṇa serves as the source of Viṣṇu, and not the other way around. Jīva confirms this idiosyncratic view in the 8th *anuccheda* of the *Tattva-saṃdarbha*:

> May Kṛṣṇa, whose being is consciousness itself and who is designated Brahman in certain Śruti texts, a portion of whom manifests as His own partial incarnations and rules over māyā and the puruṣa, and who, in His principal form, goes by the name Nārāyaṇa, and sports in Paramavyoman – may that Kṛṣṇa, Bhagavat Himself, bestow the boon of prema [love] on those here who worship His

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[55] On this subject, the *Viṣṇu-purāṇa* (6.7.74) says the following:

> *yathāgnir uddhataṣikhaḥ kakṣaṃ dahati sānilaḥ/*
> *tathā cittasthito viṣṇur yogināṃ sarvakilbiṣam//*

"Just as the blazing fire, fanned by the wind, burns up dry wood, in the same way, Viṣṇu situated in the mind of the *yogī* burns up all transgressions." [My translation].

feet.[56]

Thus, the Gauḍīya version of hierarchical ontology places the school clearly outside the bounds of the mainstream, orthodox views of the Vaidika tradition, which has always maintained that Kṛṣṇa is clearly an incarnation (*avatāra*) of Viṣṇu.

Though Caitanya was known as a formidable philosopher in his youth (even founding his own school of logic in Navadvīpa), like Socrates, he left the task to his disciples to formulate his ideas in written form.[57] One of the disciples upon whose shoulders this formidable task lay was Jīva Gosvāmin.

Jīva Gosvāmin: Life and Works

Unfortunately, not a great deal is known of Jīva's life. It is known that at an early age, he began to live the life of a mendicant sage. He spent several years living in Benaras,

[56] *Yasya brahmeti saṃjñāṃ kvacid api nigame yāti cinmātrasattāpy aṃśo yasyāṃśakaiḥ svair vibhavati vanśayann eva māyāṃ pumāṃś ca/ ekaṃ yasyaiva rūpaṃ vilasati paramavyomni nārāyaṇākhyaṃ sa śrīkṛṣṇo vidhattāṃ svayam iha bhagavān prema tatpādabhājām//*

[57] Indeed, Caitanya is said to have only written a scant eight verses himself, known as the *Śikṣāṣṭaka*, or "Eight Instructions".

where he studied various aspects of Vedic philosophy under the tutelage of Madhusūdana Vācaspati (Rosen, 148). Soon after this, Jīva settled in the holy town of Vṛndāvana, the traditional birthplace of Kṛṣṇa. He would live there for the remainder of his life.[58] Jīva Gosvāmin was the founder of the famous Rādhā-Dāmodara temple, and was instrumental in the construction of several other Vaiṣṇava temples of historical importance in Vṛndāvana. It was here, also, where he began his impressive literary career. An incredibly prolific author, it is said that he composed no less than 400,000 Sanskrit verses in support of his - and Caitanya's - philosophical outlook (Ibid., 149).[59] Two of

[58]Jīva, in conjunction with several other ascetic philosophers who were disciples of Caitanya, are known collectively as the *Ṣaḍ-Gosvāmins*. These six were all based in Vṛndāvana, and became the intellectual patriarchs of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition. The other five Gosvāmins are: Rūpa, Sanātana, Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa, Raghunāthadāsa and Gopāla Bhaṭṭa.

[59] Altogether, Jīva either composed or edited at least twenty-five works. Some of the more significant titles include: *Brahma-saṃhita-ṭīkā*, *Gopāla-campū*, and the *Hari-nāmāmṛta-vyākaraṇa*. The latter is a fascinating and ingenious Sanskrit grammar that uses many of the seemingly infinite names of Viṣṇu in order to both educate its reader in the proper rules of Sanskrit grammar, while simultaneously attempting to bring about a state of *bhakti*, or devotion for Kṛṣṇa, in the reader. Additionally, Jīva wrote the following works: *Sūtra-mālikā*; *Dhātusaṃgraha*; *Kramasaṃdarbha* (a commentary on the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*); commentaries on the *Gopālatāpinī Upaniṣad*, the *Yoga-sārastava* of the *Padma Purāṇa*, the *Gāyatrīnirvāṇakathana* of the *Agni-Purāṇa*, and Rūpa Gosvāmin's *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindu* and *Ujjvalanīlamaṇi*; *Gopālavirudāvalī*; *Mādhavamahotsava*; *Saṃkalpakalpavṛkṣa*; *Bhāvārthasūcakacampū*. Some of his other, more

his more well-known philosophical works are the *Sarva-saṃvādinī* and the *Ṣaṭ-saṃdarbha,*[60] both of which contain the bulk of his writings on epistemology. The latter is a six volume work and serves as a *summa* of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava philosophy and theology.

For this reason, it is primarily the *Ṣaṭ-saṃdarbha* that I will focus on in the present study. This *magnum opus* of Jīva Gosvāmin's is divided into six sections. These divisions include:

1)	*Tattva-saṃdarbha*	("Composition on Truth")
2)	*Bhāgavata-saṃdarbha*	("Composition on God")
3)	*Paramātma-saṃdarbha*	("Composition on the Supreme Self")
4)	*Bhakti-saṃdarbha*	("Composition on Devotion")
5)	*Prīti-saṃdarbha*	("Composition on Love")
6)	*Kṛṣṇa-saṃdarbha*	("Composition on Kṛṣṇa")

Of these six volumes, *Tattva-saṃdarbha* serves both as a summary of the philosophical arguments to be discussed in

overtly philosophical and religious writings include: *Bhakti-rasāmṛtaśeṣa*; *Kṛṣṇārcaṇadīpikā*; *Kṛṣṇapadacihna*; and the *Rādhikākarapadacihna*.

[60] The former being Jīva Gosvāmin's own commentary on the latter.

the work as a whole, as well as an in-depth explanation and defense of the epistemological criteria that Jīva accepts in support of these arguments. It is from the *Tattva-saṃdarbha*, then, in addition to the *Sarva-saṃvādinī*, that the bulk of Jīva's epistemological theory is derived.

Chapter III

Jīva's Epistemology

Pramāṇavāda: The Ten *Pramāṇas*

In general Indian philosophy (Vedic, Buddhist and Jain) there are several elements that are considered to be crucial to any complete epistemological discussion. These include the qualifying factors of:

1) *pramā*, or valid knowledge
2) *prāmāṇya*, or validity of knowledge
3) *pramātṛ*, the knower
4) *pramiti*, the action of knowledge
5) *prameya*, the object of knowledge
6) *pramāṇa*, or the means of acquiring valid knowledge.

Of these six, the school of Vedānta has traditionally focused most of its attention on the last element of knowing: *pramāṇa*. In keeping with the earlier teachers of Vedānta, the Gauḍīya school tends to confine its epistemological discussions to the question of what is a proper *pramāṇa* (valid way of knowing) and to the various problems relating to

truth and error. Jīva gives a very detailed account of all the various *pramāṇas,* or sources of knowledge, accepted as valid by the various traditional schools in his *Sarva-saṃvādinī*. There he recognizes a total of ten different ways of knowing that are variously recognized by the schools of Indian philosophy - both Vedic and non-Vedic. [61]

In his discussion of *pramāṇas*, Jīva was obviously seeking to be both inclusive and very comprehensive in his treatment of such a vast array of *pramāṇas*. The ten *pramāṇas* (valid ways of knowing) that he discusses include:

1) *śabda* (Divine word)
2) *pratyakṣa* (perception)
3) *anumāna* (inference)
4) *upamāna* (analogy)
5) *arthāpatti* (implication)
6) *saṃbhava* (possible entailment)
7) *aitiḥya* (tradition)

[61] By the terms "Vedic" and "Non-Vedic" I am, of course, only distinguishing between those philosophical systems which accept the authority of the Vedic revelation versus those which, while indigenous to India, do not accept this authority. This proper usage of the terms is in keeping with the traditional understanding of the Vaidika tradition. Used in this context, the terms refer strictly to philosophical presuppositions, and not historical periods or literary genres necessarily.

8) *ārṣa* (testimony of self-realized souls)
9) *anupalabdhi* (non-cognition)
10) ceṣṭā (knowledge acquired via direct physical effort)

While some of these categories of knowing may be familiar to most Euro-American-oriented philosophers, a few others might need some further clarification.

Arthāpatti, for example, denotes the supposition of that which is a necessity in accounting for a fact that is either seen (*dṛṣṭa*) or that is heard (*śruta*).[62] By *saṃbhava* is meant a possible entailment. It is a form of quantitative reasoning that is predicated on the principle that knowledge of a greater category necessarily leads to knowledge of a smaller fraction of that same category. For example: if Devadatta has 100 cows, then it is true - and necessarily so - that he has 50 cows; if I win a million rupees, then all of my one rupee problems are solved. *Aitiḥya* indicates a continuous and unbroken chain of tradition of which it is not

[62] According to Chakravarti, there is a specific form of *arthāpatti*, i.e., *śrutārthāpatti*, which is highly valued by Jīva. It involves "...the assumption of a fact in order to explain what is known from scriptures..." (Chakravarti, 7) Despite its acceptance by Jīva, he curiously does not include *śrutārthāpatti* in his list of officially acceptable *pramāṇas*, possibly subsuming it under *arthāpatti* proper.

possible to know the originator. Included under the category of *aitiḥya* would be, for example, many folk tales explaining the origins of a local custom or belief. Finally, by the term *anupalabdhi*, or non-cognition, is meant the knowledge of the absence (*abhāva*) of something at a specific place and/or time "...in the absence of any hindrance to its being cognized there or then." (Chakravarti, 6).

Other than the fact that all of the Vaidika schools accept the preeminence of *śabda* as the most valid of *pramāṇas*, there is little agreement among the various Vaidika and Avaidika Indian traditions as to the exact number of *pramāṇas* to be accepted as valid. For the Cārvākas, who are atheist empiricists, and thus non-Vaidika, there is only *pratyakṣa* (sensory perception).[63] The Bauddhas (Buddhists), and some Vaiśeṣikas, accept *anumāna* (inference) in addition to perception. Sāṃkhyas accept the above two and *śabda* (divine word). Naiyāyikas accept the above three and add *upamāna* (analogy). The followers of Prabhākara would add *arthāpatti* (postulation) to these.

[63] Indeed, Cārvākas, like their Humean counterparts of later European history, do not even accept the validity of inference, since they feel that one inference is necessarily dependent upon yet another, preceding, inference for its establishment, and this inference would in turn be dependent on another inference, and so on leading to a retrogression *ad infinitum*. As we will see, Jīva Gosvāmin would seem to not totally disagree with this position - but to a very different end.

Vedānta, and the followers of Kumārila Bhaṭṭa, accept all these and include *anupalabdhi* (non-cognition). One of the curious features of Jīva Gosvāmin's epistemology is that unlike the other schools mentioned above, he rejects none of these *pramāṇas*. Rather, he accepts the validity of them all, and several more, making for a grand total of ten ways of knowing.

All *Pramāṇas* Subsumed Under *Pratyakṣa*, *Anumāna* and *Śabda*

Rather than rejecting any potentially valid way of knowing, what Jīva does is to creatively order them all into a pyramidal hierarchy of functional dependence. By Jīva's account, seven of these *pramāṇas* are dependent upon, and can therefore be subsumed under, three main *pramāṇas*. These three overarching *pramāṇas* are *śabda*, *pratyakṣa* and *anumāna*, which for our present purposes can now be seen as the general categories of a) divine word, b) empiricism and c) inferential reasoning, respectively. Under *śabda* (divine word), he directly places *ārṣa*. Under *anumāna* (inferential reasoning), we find *arthāpatti*, *saṃbhava* and *upamāna*. Finally, Jīva sees *anupalabdhi*, *aitiḥya* and *ceṣṭā* as being dependent upon *pratyakṣa* (empiricism).

Anumāna and *pratyakṣa* are in turn themselves dependent upon *śabda*, divine revelation being the most thoroughly reliable of *pramāṇas* in Jīva's system. The resulting dependent hierarchy looks thus:

Śabda

Pratyakṣa		*Anumāna*
Anupalabdhi	*Ārṣa*	*Arthāpatti*
Aitiḥya		*Saṃbhava*
Ceṣṭā		*Upamāna*

By way of defending his notion of the superiority of *śabda* (divine word) over *pratyakṣa* (sense perception) and *anumāna* (inferential reasoning), Jīva Gosvāmin, as well as later Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* (preceptors), offers several compelling criticisms of the latter two *pramāṇas*, which I will now recreate.

Critique I

Peering Through Broken Spectacles: A Critique of *Pratyakṣa*

The one *pramāṇa* that is accepted by all the schools of Indian philosophy, Vedic and non-Vedic alike, as being a legitimate means of knowing is *pratyakṣa*. As Karl Potter explains "...all schools of Indian philosophy take perception as a legitimate *pramāṇa* or valid means of knowledge, since there are some events that we directly perceive which are clearly part of the scope of any adequate philosophical system" (Potter, 58). I will begin my description of Jīva's critique, then, with *pratyakṣa*, that which is perceived by all beings via the senses.

The full implications of the term "*pratyakṣa*" must be thoroughly understood before any critique of this *pramāṇa* can be sufficiently undertaken. One explanation of the word "*pratyakṣa*" is derived from the verb root *akṣ*, meaning "to penetrate, reach, embrace", coupled with the prefix *prati*, "back, against." A better explanation posits *prati* as meaning "against", with *akṣa* being taken as the noun for "eye". Thus, *pratyakṣa* has the literal meaning of "against the eye". *Pratyakṣa*, then, cannotes the means of deriving

knowledge acquired from sensory data that is impressed upon the sense faculties. Two kinds of *pratyakṣa* are recognized: a) *nirvikalpa-pratyakṣa*, indeterminate perception, and b) *savikalpa-pratyakṣa*, or determinate perception. *Nirvikapa-pratyakṣa* is the very base form of awareness that occurs as a result of the initial impression of an object upon the senses. This initial impression provides the senses with isolated data. *Savikalpa-pratyakṣa* is the developed cognition of the object as qualified. It serves to compound the seemingly isolated data, thus facilitating the groundwork necessary for the arising of subject/predicate conceptualization.

The Nyāya school holds that two different kinds of perception are possible: a) Normal (*laukika*) and b) Supernormal (*alaukika*). Of the former, six types are listed: 1. *saṃyoga*, 2. *samyukta-samavāya*, 3. *samyukta-samaveta sama-vāya*, 4. *samavāya*, 5. *samaveta-samavāya*, 6. *viśeṣana-viśeṣya-bhāva*. Additionally, three forms of *alaukika* (Supernormal) perception are listed: 1. *sāmānya-lakṣaṇa*, 2. *jñāna-lakṣaṇa*, 3. *yogaja*. *Alaukika* perception is trans-empirical, and thus relates intimately with the means for knowing God that is the subject of this book. For the Advaita school of Vedānta, the only cognizable object of *nirvikalpa-pratyakṣa* (base

awareness) is Brahman. This is a form of knowledge that is independent of any form of relatedness between the substantive and the qualifying attributes of the substantive. For the Advaita school of Śaṃkara, Brahman can never be qualified; thus *savikalpa-pratyakṣa*, or determinate perception, is not the proper form of perception for knowing Brahman.[64] The Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta school disagrees with this claim.

For the latter school, it is incorrect to posit *nirvikalpa-pratyakṣa* as simply the perception of an amorphous "That". Rather, all knowledge, including even base awareness, is necessarily knowledge of a qualified object. As Rama Prasad explains the importance of this distinction:

> The significant thing in Rāmānuja's theory of knowledge is that it is not at all to be understood without the duality of the subject and object. There must be an object given and the subject who knows it. Jnāna, or knowledge, is the relation between them.
>
> (103)

Qualification of the object of knowledge is a necessary pre-

[64] Śaṃkara owes much to earlier Naiyāyika (followers of the Nyāya school) and Buddhist philosophers for the earlier formulation of this idea. (Rama Prasad, 108)

condition for any form of conscious perception, Rāmānuja holds, since it simply is not possible for consciousness to know existence *per se* without the benefit of any defining property or attribute. Rāmānuja states this position clearly in his *Śrī-bhāṣya* commentary on the *Brahma-sūtras*:

> Moreover, those that know the power and import of words say that the words samvid, anubhuti, jnāna are words implying relation. It is not seen either in ordinary language or in scripture that the verbs 'to know', etc. are at all used without an object or without a subject
>
> (79)[65]

For Viśiṣṭādvaita, *nirvikalpa-pratyakṣa* denotes primary perception, and *savikalpa-pratyakṣa* is perception of the same object on subsequent occasions. This would later become the prevailing opinion of all the later Vaiṣṇava schools of thought, as confirmed by Satprakashananda:

> It is to be noted that indeterminate knowledge is not recognized by monotheistic Vedānta comprising the five schools of Vaiṣṇavism, which uphold Brahman with attributes (*saguṇa*) as the ultimate reality.

[65] *The Vedānta-Sūtras with the Śrī-Bhāṣya of Rāmānujāchārya*, Vol. I. Madras: The Educational Publishing Co., 1961.

(Satprakashananda, 107)

Jīva Gosvāmin, as we will see later on in this book, would certainly agree more with the latter, Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedāntic, view on this subject.

Employing the Cārvākin (atheist materialist) as the most obvious and most vivid example of a Pratyakṣavādin, or an empiricist, one who holds to *pratyakṣa* basically claims that if one can not see it, hear it, taste it, smell it, or trip over it, it does not exist. And if it does not exist in this stark empirical sense, then it certainly cannot be regarded as valid data that are subject to being known rationally. Jīva easily refutes this claim by offering several powerful arguments found previously throughout the history of Vaidika (Hindu) philosophy.

He begins his critique with an attack on the notion of universal verifiability. For the Pratyakṣavādin (empiricist), truth is derived from the universal concomitance of perceptual experience derived by all living beings at all times, in all places, via their senses. The truth, for example, of the otherwise conjectural proposition, "*Fire is not a pleasant thing for sentient beings to bathe in*" is derived from the assumed fact that all sentient beings have the universally

identical reaction when having their bodies subjected to fire: i.e., the very unpleasant physical sensation of pain (*duḥkha*). However, Vedic philosophy points out that for any sensory phenomenon to be truly verified on such a universal scope, then, following the empiricist's very own criteria, such a phenomenon would have to be simultaneously experienced by the sum total of all beings capable of sensory perception. All beings, at all times, all places and all similar circumstances would have to equally confirm the validity of such a statement for such a statement to be demonstratively true.[66]

Such universal confirmation, of course, would never be a viable possibility since it is clearly impossible to verify the experiences of literally every sentient being everywhere and throughout all time. Perhaps, for example, there is at least one person living in a tiny hamlet in Outer Mongolia whom we have never met for whom bathing in fire as an integral part of her morning ablutions is a richly pleasurable experience, thus ruining the universal concomitance of such a claim.

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[66] Such a condition would also have to, of course, bar the possibility of any number of these individuals purposefully deceiving us about the nature of the sensation that they are experiencing, or experiencing such sensations due to a hallucinatory state.

The Pratyakṣavādin (empiricist) has not tested the experience of all people on earth (which, again, is the empiricist's very own criterion for basing the validity of truth), Jīva would claim, nor of all people throughout all of history. Indeed, it is arguable whether the empiricist has had the opportunity to sample even a minutely tiny fractional quantity of sentient beings large enough to verify any such general conjecture. It is, then, a distinct possibility that the supposed general rules derived from empirical observation are derived from no more than a collection of exceptions, since the proposed rules cannot be demonstrated. Thus, such a claim cannot be verified in any meaningful *a posteriori* manner, consequently rendering such a claim to no more than an *a priori* assertion.

While such seemingly excruciatingly rigid tests of the logic of an epistemological claim might seem superfluously precise on the part of Vedic philosophy, in actuality all philosophers - whether Euro-American or Asian - are in agreement that such a claim must be able to stand such testing in order to be considered logically valid and philosophically true. This claim of universal verifiability does not pass the test of Vaidika philosophy because, strictly speaking, it does not even sufficiently pass the test of rigid

empiricism itself. In addition to this criticism of *pratyakṣa*, Jīva delineates the more significant reasons why, to his mind, knowledge derived solely through the senses is incapable of ever offering its recipient perfectly valid and truthful knowledge.

The Four Human Defects

Jīva Gosvāmin points out four epistemic and psychological defects that are inherent in every member of the human species, and which thus render empirical knowledge incapable of perfectly certain knowledge.[67] These universal flaws are:

1) *Bhrama* - the tendency to fall victim to illusion, and thus make mistakes and errors in judgment.
2) *Pramāda* - error caused by inattentiveness on the part of the presumed recipient of knowledge.
3) *Vipralasā* - the desire to cheat others (in addition to ourselves).
4) *Karaṇāpāṭava* - error arising from inherent insuf

[67] See specifically, Anuccheda 9 of *Tattva-saṃdarbha* for Jīva's comments; "*bhramādidoṣacatuṣṭaya*...".

ficiencies of the sense organs.

Bhrama As an example of the first defect, *bhrama*, or falling victim to illusion, there is the ever-famous Vedāntic illustration of a person mistaking an innocent, insentient rope lying in the middle of a path for a vicious snake. On closer inspection, the frightened traveler soon realizes that the apparent snake is no more than a harmless discarded rope. What the individual is often convinced that he or she is perceiving empirically is thus not always in consonance with external or objective reality.

Pramāda An example of inattentiveness, *pramāda*, can most likely be provided by almost any individual who has spent some time as a college student at one period or another. The mind and the senses are not always simultaneously focused on the same empirical object. We can be apparently observing some external phenomenon very closely (such as a laboratory experiment, or notes written by a professor on a blackboard), while in actuality, we are internally thinking about problems that we are having with our tax return or our computer at home or our love-life. Human beings are invariably prone to divided, and thus imperfect, states of attentiveness.

<u>*Vipralasā*</u> By *vipralasā* (the cheating tendency) is meant a) the natural egoic tendency that many of us have to attempt to prevail over others - often regardless of any and all valid evidence contradicting our own view, and b) the ego-saving tendency we sometimes have to not accept the truth ourselves for a wide variety of internal psychological reasons. The epistemic defect of *vipralasā*, the average Vedāntist would say, arises as a direct result of *ahaṃkāra*, or ego. Even if only on a subconscious plane, the truth can sometimes be a frightening prospect for anyone to have to face.[68]

<u>*Karaṇāpāṭava*</u> The fourth empirical defect, *karaṇāpāṭava*, indicates that the capacity of our senses is frustratingly limited and far from perfect. Even under the most ideal of circumstances, our senses cannot deliver a perfectly accurate account of what they are perceiving. This is true as a result of several possible reasons. First, one's senses might, for example, be anatomically or genetically flawed (explaining why so many of us need to supplement our deficiencies with the technical assistance of such devices as

[68] The mid 19th century Danish philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard, apparently agreed with this assessment of human nature when he wrote, "How many have not asked 'What is Truth' and at bottom hoped that vast spaces would intervene before truth came so close to him that in the immediate now it would determine his duty for action at that very moment". (*Works of Love*)

glasses, contacts, and hearing aids). Second, our senses are not capable of perceiving everything that we know for a scientific fact to exist. For example, our eyes are incapable of seeing the infrared spectrum and radio waves, or of peering through most constructions composed of sufficiently dense matter, such as the average wall. Third, sense perception alone is no guarantor of either quantitative or dimensional accuracy. The sun appears to the eye to be no bigger than the circumference of a quarter, yet our capacity of reason tells us that it is in actuality many times larger. Forth, we often make significant mistakes about the qualitative nature of a sense object when we rely only upon the power of our senses. How often have people mistaken “fool’s gold” for actual gold? How many have seen a piece of pastry that looked so good to the eye, only to then taste it and realize that it was stale?

The attempt to govern one's thoughts, judgments and actions with nothing more than the information that is derived through sensory perception is a project that is destined to be quite problematic, both rationally and practically. It is a path that is destined to fail.

It is easily arguable that every footstep we take is predicated upon the assumption that with each successive step

there will be solid ground upon which to rest our foot. This assumption on the part of the pedestrian is certainly not based entirely upon visual observation. For even the staunchest empiricist most likely does not spend every second of her life looking down to empirically verify that each step she is taking is not actually a step into a bottomless black void, but rather onto solid pavement. Similarly, when the empirical philosopher observes her spouse turn the corner while driving away in the minivan, thus depriving the observing empirical philosopher of direct perception of the vehicle, it is doubtful that the observer truly believes that the van containing her spouse has now entered into a perilous state of non-existence, regardless of how devoted a fan our observer is of either Carvaka or Hume. Radical empiricism simply does not work, whether you are a radical empiricist or not.

How, then, do we explain the existence of such seemingly indispensable non-empirical assumptions on the part of both exclusively empirical philosophers, as well as rational human beings in general? Is pure empiricism ever humanly natural, possible, or achievable? Human activities and judgments are often based upon purely non-empirical determining mechanisms. In the case of the two example activities cited above, the operative epistemic mechanisms

under which our subjects are assuming knowledge would have to be either a) faith, or b) inference. Faith is the belief in *X* statement, claim, or existence of a phenomenon in the face of either 1) no evidence or, 2) evidence to the contrary. Faith is, consequently, so weak a form of "knowing" that it cannot be properly termed a *pramāṇa* per se.[69]

Rather than faith, only the second epistemic mechanism - inferential knowledge - can be pointed to as the epistemic factor that provides us with practical and reliable extra-empirical knowledge. We feel safe taking our steps while taking a walk, not because of empirical evidence that the ground will be there, and not because of blind faith, but because we naturally infer that our previous experiences with safe walking will most probably be replicated during our current walk. And we are usually quite correct in our assumption. Without recourse to inferential knowledge, then, life would itself be unlivable. Thus, while radical empiricism can certainly be cognitively understood, it cannot be even remotely practically lived without the indispensable aid of inferential knowledge (*anumāna*).

[69] In both Vaidika and Euro-American philosophy, the acceptance of faith, gut instincts, feelings, chance luck, or random guesses as valid ways of acquiring knowledge is not very prominent. Faith, however, does play an overarching epistemic role in the Abrahamic theological dogmas of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Consequently, much greater than the power of the senses, all Vaidika (Hindu) philosophers hold, are the knowledge acquiring capabilities of human reason. And it this capacity that is critiqued next.

Critique II

Establishing the Limits of Reason: A Critique of *Anumāna*

Anumāna, or inferential knowledge, has been a highly developed discipline throughout the history Indian philosophy. The traditional schools of Indian philosophy - Vaidika, Buddhist and Jaina alike - have always placed a great deal of emphasis on the tools of logic, deductive argumentation, and propositional analysis in the search for truth. The dialectically surcharged systems of analysis created by the Vaidika logicians comprise an entire corpus of literature known as the *Hetu-śāstra*. The systems of logic developed in India strongly rivals - and in some cases surpasses - many of the developments achieved throughout the history of Euro-American logic. Unlike the three-sided syllogism of the West,[70] for example, Nyāya logicians for-

[70] A syllogism consists of three categorical sentences, each of which contains three different terms, with each term appearing in two different sentences. E.G.:

All humans are mortal Or, symbolically All H are M

mulated a five-sided syllogistic system consisting of:

1. Proposition
2. Reason
3. General Principle/Example
4. Application
5. Conclusion.

In practical application, such a proposition would have the following appearance:

1. Proposition: There is a fire on the mountain.
2. Reason: Because there is smoke on the mountain.
3. General Principle/Example: Wherever there is smoke, there is fire; for example, as in a kitchen.
4. Application: There is smoke over the mountain.
5. Conclusion: Therefore, there is a fire on the mountain.

Employing tools of inferential reasoning of similar manner and design, the logicians of India have historically placed

No Gods are humans	No G are H
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Therefore, no Gods are mortal	∴ No G are M

great emphasis on the powers of the human mind to determine the validity of truth claims. Despite its seemingly apparent superiority over *pratyakṣa* (empiricism), however, *anumāna* is, in turn, not spared from Jīva Gosvāmin's criticism.[71]

To fully grasp the full breath of Jīva's position on the efficacy of reason, however, it is crucial to first understand the status of intellect itself in the minds of all Vaidika thinkers in general. In traditional Vaidika philosophy, subjective existential reality is firmly demarcated into a hierarchical order of dependence. Unlike in the West, Vaidika philosophers, especially those of the Vedānta school, make a very clear distinction between the different functional aspects of the human person. Broadly speaking, the distinction made is between the attributes of body (*deha*); mind (*manas*); intellect (*buddhi*); artificial, egoic "self" (*ahaṃkāra*); and consciousness, or soul, or true (natural) self (*ātman*).[72] Of

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[71] Jīva Gosvāmin is taking a minority view in placing *anumāna* in a superior position vis-à-vis *pratyakṣa*. The vast majority of Vaidika philosophers see *pratyakṣa* (but in the form of "perception", and not "empiricism") as being of more importance generally.

[72] In modern Euro-American philosophy, there are two basic schools of thought on the subject of the compositional nature of the human being. The dualist paradigm considers rational beings to be composed of two distinct elements: mind and body (respectively, *res cogitans* and *res extensa* in Cartesian Latin terminology). For the Materialist, on the

these various aspects of the human being, it is without doubt *ātman* that takes precedence over and above the other elements.

Ātman in its substantial nature is considered to be ontologically anterior and qualitatively superior to every other aspect of the human person, including - in a descending order of qualified dependence – ego, intellect, mind and body. Of these, only *ātman* is eternal, being the ultimate essential identity of each individual living being.[73] Our true self is *ātman*. According to Vedānta, the attributes of this true self, or *ātman*, are *sat*, *cit* and *ānanda*, or unending being, consciousness, and bliss, respectively. On the other hand, whereas the physical body is thought to be composed of a combination of five gross material elements,[74] mind and intellect are also considered to be

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other hand, there is body only, with mind functioning merely as a biological extension, or nervous/chemical by-product, of physicality.

[73] Contrary to less informed opinion, a natural sense of self-identity (*aham-pratyāya*), or 'I'-cognition, is intrinsic to the essential state of *ātman*. *Aham-pratyāya*, or the natural 'I'-cognition of *ātman*, is to be radically juxtaposed to the artificial and superimposed element of *ahaṃkāra* - literally "'I'-maker".

[74] These are the *mahābhūtas*: fire, water, earth, wind, and ether. While very similar to both the ancient Greek and Chinese attempts at an early elemental table, the idea of these five elements clearly has its origins in *Sāṃkhya* philosophy.

material in nature as well, but of a far "subtler" variety. Indeed, mind (*manas*) and intellect (*buddhi*) are considered to be material elements in themselves.

Mind, for Vaidika philosophy, is considered to be the sixth sense. In the same way that the five normative senses are perceptual windows to exterior phenomena, similarly the mind is a window to the internal states that arise within a person - emotions, fears, cravings and intuitions. It is through the sense of mind that you feel that you are sad, angry, or have a sense of foreboding. Mind, additionally, is the seat of imagination, desire, and the subconscious storehouse of those past experiences that give rise to memory. Like the five corporeal senses, the mind can be either a person's greatest ally, or a person's worst nemesis.[75] The determining factor creating one or the other situation lies in the depth of control that an individual has over this powerful instrument. With one's mind under the full control of one's higher reasoning faculties (*buddhi*), which in

[75] In the *Viṣṇu-purāṇa*, an important devotional text, it is said:

> *mana eva manuṣyāṇāṃ kāraṇaṃ bandha-mokṣayoḥ*
> *bandhāya viṣayāsaṅgi muktyai nirviṣayaṃ manaḥ*

"To humans, the mind alone is the cause of bondage and of liberation; the mind attached to sense-objects makes for bondage; the mind which is not attached to sense-objects makes for liberation." [My translation]

turn must be under the direct guidance of *ātman* (one's true self), one can achieve the state of self-realization and liberation that is the goal of the Vedāntic school, and of Vedic spirituality in general. But a mind not in the subjugation of its possessor can lead to the delusion *(māyā)* of misidentifying the true, eternal self with the body, which, according to the Vedāntic world-view, is merely illusory and temporary.

The functional relationship that the subordinate mind has *vis-à-vis* consciousness is explained well by Henry Stapp, senior physics researcher at U. C. Berkeley:

> In GVV [Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Vedānta], the information flows from the objects, but only up to the mental level, at which point consciousness reaches out to directly perceive mental objects, the objectively experiencable stuff of matter
>
> (Stapp, 38)

Rāmānuja, many centuries earlier, would have agreed with Professor Stapps' accessment of the self-luminous nature of consciousness:

> The essential nature of consciousness – or knowledge - consists therein that it shines

> forth, or manifests itself, through its own being to its own substrate at the present moment; or that it is instrumental in proving its own object to its substrate.
>
> (Trans. Thibaut, 48)

Thus, the function of perception ordinarily attributed to the mind in Western philosophy and epistemology are, for Vedānta, traced back to the inherent powers of consciousness.

While the mind is viewed as both an internal sense and a storehouse of informational data, the intellect (*buddhi)*, on the other hand, is considered to be the higher faculty that processes, categorizes and makes decisions about the information presented to it by both the physical senses and mind. *Buddhi* (intellect) is the cognitive organizing dimension of the human being that serves as the seat of reason. It is *buddhi* that gives direction and focus to the mind. It is the referee of all the analytic functioning, logical systematization, and philosophic speculation that takes place in the otherwise anarchic playground of the mind. Despite being the wielder of all of these powerful cognitive tools, however, *buddhi* is still considered by all Vaidika philosophers to be subordinate to the *ātman*, which is by its very ontological constitution transmaterial, and therefore

transrational.

The dependent hierarchy of the various components responsible for what we know as a human person can be further illustrated in its entirety by the following chart:[76]

[76] This list is specifically taken from the *Bhagavad-gītā* (7:4), which, as one member of the *Prasthānatraya*, or three textual sources accepted as foundational to Vedānta philosophy, is considered an authoritative account of these components. In its entirety, Kṛṣṇa states: "This is My divided eightfold nature; earth, water, fire, wind, ether, mind, intellect and self-consciousness". (*Bhūmir āpo'nala vāyuḥ khaṃ mano buddhir eva ca/ahaṃkāra itīyaṃ me bhinnā prakṛtir aṣṭadhā*) [My translation]

Components of the Human Person

1. Spiritual Component

Ātman
(Individual consciousness at its most basic)

2. Subtle Material Components

Ahaṃkāra
(Ego, the artificial sense of distinctness arising from identification with the body)

Buddhi
(Intellect, cognitive organizing principle)

Manas
(Mind, sixth sense; repository of mental data)

3. Gross Material Components

Deha
(Material body, which is composed of the following)

Kha	***Vāyu***	***Anala***	***Āpaḥ***	***Bhūmi***
(Ether)	(Wind)	(Fire)	(Water)	(Earth)

Thus, for the Vedāntist, there exists a descending order of these elements. *Manas* (mind) takes precedence over the body, due to both its inherent qualitative superiority over the body, as well as the mind's ability to perform functions that are considered complex and subtle beyond the body's capabilities. Above *manas,* in turn, there is *buddhi* (intellect), without whose higher cognitive organizational abilities the mind would be an uncontrolled menagerie of random memories, fantasies and impulses. *Ahaṃkāra* (ego) is the principle that gives the individual human being an integrated sense of purpose and identity within the realm of *saṃsāra*. It is the illusory "I" for which every other subordinate element exists and functions. Finally, *ātman*, pure, eternal consciousness itself, is considered to be the fountainhead of all these various modes of material energy (*prakṛti*).

Jīva Gosvāmin, in concert with all Vedāntists, feels that the spiritual dimension of a human person, being categorically superior to the intellect, is beyond the full purview of the intellect. Being transrational by its very ontological nature, consciousness (*ātman*) is inconceivable by the apprehensive powers of the intellect, which are limited to grasping only those descriptive data that are within its cognitive ju-

risdiction.[77] Reason, by its very functional nature, is limited to the realm of intelligibles. How then can it be possible, Jīva asks, for the limited to fully grasp the infinite bounds of the unlimited? Contemporary Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava philosopher O.B.L. Kapoor explains "...thought necessarily implies conditions... It cannot, therefore, apprehend the Absolute Truth, which is beyond all limits and conditions" (Kapoor, 64). The powers of human reason are simply not powerful to the necessarily sufficient degree that must obtain in order to know perfect truth in its total breath and depth.[78]

The failure of the rational endeavor to grasp the transrational can be understood in two different ways in Vedāntic thought, one quantitative, the other functional.

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[77] In order to fully understand this Vedāntic contention, it is crucial to make a clear distinction between two different kinds of knowledge: a) Descriptive Knowledge and b) Acquaintative Knowledge. Knowledge by description is certainly a possibility for Vaidika philosophers; for example, the ability to intellectually grasp the factual concept that one of God's attributes is infinite love. To have an intimate experiential understanding of that infinite love via a direct knowledge by acquaintance, however, is precisely what Jīva, and all Vedic philosophers, claims is unattainable by the mind and by the intellectual faculties of the human being. To comprehend intellectually is not the same as to know experientially. To know experientially is to know in the most intimate and direct of senses.

[78] The *Brahma-sūtras* support this assessment: *tarko 'pratiṣṭhānāt*, "Logic affords no standing." (2.1.11)

Quantitative Limitation: The first argument presents the *anumāna* project as a distinctly mathematical impossibility. It is a project analogous to attempting to place the contents of the Atlantic Ocean into a test tube the size of one's thumb in order to analyze it; or trying to count up to infinity, but only being allowed to use no more than three prime numbers to do so. Given the vast expanse of the Infinite (*ānanta*) - which is precisely one of the primary distinguishing attributes of Brahman (God), the very subject presently under discussion - any finite instrument, even one as powerfully capable of probative insight as the human intellect, would be necessarily insufficient for the task. There simply is no quantitative correspondence between a) the limited tool employed and b) the infinitely daunting epistemic task at hand (attempting to know God).

Functional Limitation: The functional aspect of the argument communicates the notion that transcendental subject matters are simply not within the domain of rationality due to the categorically different natures of each. A bulldozer, for example, is a wonderfully sufficient tool for digging massive holes in the ground, but to use such a tool in the performance of delicate brain surgery would be an absurd misuse of an instrument indeed. Similarly, *buddhi*, being an entity of radically distinct ontological nature when com-

pared with the natures of either *ātman* (individual self) or Brahman (God), is not, so this argument goes, capable of being applied to *ātman* or Brahman. B. V. Tripurari Swami, a modern-day Hare Krishna *guru*, concurs with this assessment of Jīva's opinion: "Inferior means cannot reveal superior ends...Intellect, being inferior to the soul, does not have sufficient power to reveal the soul" (Tripurari, 38). Jīva's critique of the limits of *anumāna* are not solely restricted to these arguments, however.

The most foundational supposition of *anumāna* (inferential reasoning) is what *nyāya* (Vaidika logic) calls *vyāpti*, or invariable concomitance. Revisiting the example of the smoke seen over the mountain that I employed in the previous section illustrating the Indian syllogism, the inferential knowledge of fire being present on the mountain as a result of the witnessing of smoke is neither an invariable nor an incontrovertible fact. There can be alternative explanations for the presence of the smoke. For example, smoke is sometimes found to last for quite some time even after a fire is no longer existent. The existence of fire on the mountain, then, does not necessarily coincide in any temporal sense with the perception of smoke. There could be merely a causal connection between the two (a

previous fire causing the *present* smoke) rather than a connection of immediate dependence ("there is smoke *now*, therefore there must be fire *now*"). Alternately, the smoke that the observer is witnessing could possibly have an alternative origin. The smoke could actually have an origin that is nothing more incendiary than a dust cloud resulting from the collective hoofs of a herd of gazelle making its way across the mountain range. There could possibly be an entire range of other explanations for the presence of smoke witnessed over the mountain. Thus there is no necessary entailment, no absolute link of causality, between the perceived effect and the supposed inferential cause.

In an argument that sounds very similar to that of the British radical empiricist David Hume, some transrational Vaidika epistemologists - Jīva and many other Vedāntists among them - would take the argument of non-entailment and turn it on its head.[79] Rather than leading to the imma-

[79] Hume's account of the relation between effect and cause is not limited to the epistemological realm, of course, since his skepticism extends to even physical causality as well. Hume's claim is that, since the connection between cause and effect can not be verified either empirically, nor by such a connection being a necessary relation of ideas (the proposition "*x* is the cause of *y*" not being a proposition that is deducible from the concept "*x*"), therefore there is no such connection operative. Rather, it is merely due to repeatedly experiencing one occurrence happening subsequent to another that human beings then expect there to be a given effect from a given previous action. Human

ture skepticism currently in vogue among many modern Humean-inspired philosophers, Jīva would likely agree that any inferential connections between effect and apparent cause are merely highly conjectural *ratio consequentia* at best, only to then offer *śabda*, or Divine Word, as the only sure means of solidifying such otherwise weak connections. Whereas the Skeptics' critique of knowledge leads them to a reality devoid of meaning, Jīva's critique of knowledge leads him to a reality centered upon God's necessary grace.

Knowledge, then, that is derived from the *pramāṇa* (means of knowledge-acquisition) of logical conjecture (*anumāna*) - like that achieved through the *pramāṇa* of sense experience (*pratyakṣa*) - is ultimately only as perfect and reliable as the individual using the *pramāṇa*. And human beings are necessarily imperfect by nature. Thus Jīva holds that *anumāna* - alone and unaided by other *pramāṇas* - is insufficient for reaching anything approximating a conclusive foundation of knowledge pertaining to the Absolute.

It is exceedingly crucial to understand, however, that these ancillary *pramāṇas* are not by any means rejected outright

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beings, Hume contends, come to merely believe that an effect will follow a cause. There is, however, no absolute guarantee in Hume's mind that any seeming conjunctions between cause and effect will always be the case.

by either Jīva or by most other Vaiṣṇava (Theistic) Vedāntists. Vaiṣṇava Vedāntists, like all Vedic philosophers, certainly feel that the *pramāṇas* of *anumāna* (inferential reasoning) and *pratyakṣa* (empiricism), without the aid of *śabda* (divine word), are insufficient for gaining any firm knowledge of transcendental subject matters; but they simultaneously recognize these two *pramāṇas*' utility as valid means of gaining knowledge of the material world.

These theistic philosophers do, however, have several notes of caution in the use of these two non-*śabdic pramāṇas*. 1) They state that such *pramāṇas* are only valid within the bounds that are naturally demarcated by their areas of respective concern. It is legitimate, for example, to use one's olfactory sense to smell milk in order to ascertain its freshness (the realm of *pratyakṣa*). This same nose, however, will not reveal the solution to an algebraic formula (the realm of *anumāna*), and certainly nothing about metaphysical matters (the realm of *śabda)*, such as the nature of the relationship between God and the material world. Similarly, these two *pramāṇas* (*anumāna* and *pratyakṣa*) are rejected as means of acquiring transcendental knowledge. Scents are the objects-of-knowledge (*prameya*) of

pratyakṣa; algebraic formulas are the objects-of-knowledge (*prameya*) of *anumāna*; and God is the object-of-knowledge (*prameya*) of *śabda*. 2) Even when using the *pramāṇas* of *pratyakṣa* and *anumāna* to determine the nature of subjects strictly within their respective domains, it is essential that we realize the inherent limits of these powerful, yet far from perfect, means of securing knowledge even within those very domains. Again, these *pramāṇas* are only as unerring as are the beings employing them. Neither of them - with the sole exception of *śabda* - are foolproof. Both our senses and our intellect can make mistakes. Thus, they should be used as generally reliable guides towards the acquisition of knowledge, but not as foolproof guarantors of perfectly accurate knowledge. 3) Ultimately, these *pramāṇas* must function in a subordinate position vis-à-vis *śabda* (divine word). All knowledge, according to the Vaidika world-view, has its source in Transcendence. This being the case, that knowledge which reveals the Transcendent to the fullest degree is that knowledge upon which all other forms of knowledge are predicated and dependent. *Pratyakṣa* and *anumāna* are not rejected outright by Vedāntists as valid ways of knowing. Rather, it is their supposed independence from *śabda*, their claim to offer perfect knowledge, and their ability to peer into the win-

dow of transcendent reality, that is ultimately denied.

Critique III

Perceiving the Imperceptible: A Critique of *Śabda*

Vaidika philosophers ultimately reject the idea that the processes of *pratyakṣa* and *anumāna* are means that are sufficiently capable of providing definitive criteria for formulating metaphysical judgments. Reliance on empiricism and rationality alone are seen as being nothing more than impetuous attempts by the finite to grasp the Infinite. As such, they are ultimately doomed to fail as sufficient means to understand the Absolute. But, while the finite can never fully know the nature of the Infinite using finite means, at the same time, in order for the Infinite to truly live up to His[80] omnicompetent label, He must contain within Himself the ability to make Himself known to the finite. Any lesser expectation of God would be a clear encroachment upon His omnipotent status. This theo-dependent revealing

[80] My use of masculine pronouns in referring to God is neither arbitrary nor the result of my own personal gender preference when referring to the Absolute. Rather, they are used in order to convey the fact that for Jīva Gosvāmin (as for Caitanya), God is quite specifically seen in terms of the personage of Kṛṣṇa, the speaker of the *Bhagavad-gītā*. For an indepth examination of the question of the gender-identity of God in the Vaidika tradition, please see my book *The Shakti Principle: Encountering the Feminine Power of God*; Houston, Dharma Sun Media, 2005. Available through: www.dharmacentral.com.

process is what Vaidika philosophy terms the process of *śabda*, or Divine Word. Rather than using an ascending or accumulative means to achieve knowledge of the Absolute, Vaiṣṇava (theistic) Vedāntists recommend the descending route of *śabda*. In other words, according to Jīva Gosvāmin, as well as Rāmānuja, Madhva, Niṃbarka and other Vaiṣṇava philosophers, the proper way of gaining valid knowledge about the Absolute is to have the Absolute reveal Himself to the human person.

Vaiṣṇava Vedāntists hold that complete and unerring knowledge of all transcendent and temporal subject matters, known in Sanskrit as *sarva-jñā* (omniscience), is one of the distinguishing attributes of the Absolute. This being the case, *brahma-vidyā*, or knowledge of the Absolute, is not to be attained by making a strenuous ascent up the steep Himālaya of mental speculation, but can only come about via a direct connection with that omniscient Absolute. Comparing Jīva's descending model of knowledge acquisition with the *pratyakṣa*-heavy methodology of modern science, Henry Stapp, senior physics researcher at U. C. Berkeley, says:

> The G V V [Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Vedānta] ontology is analytic, whereas the classical

> physics model of nature is synthetic. That is the G V V conceptualization of the totality is top-down - it starts from the unified whole (the Supreme Person) and tries to identify component processes that exist and are defined only within the enveloping structure provided by the whole. In contrast, the classical physics idealization is bottom-up - it starts from the idea of distinct elemental parts and seeks to represent the whole as aggregates of these independent elemental parts.
>
> (Stapp, 13)

Thus, knowledge of the Absolute, for both Jīva Gosvāmin, as well as for the majority of traditional Vaidika philosophers, is revealed by the Whole (God) to the seeker by means of direct śābdic transmission. As we will see, the epistemic mechanics of this process of transmission are laid out by the Vedānta system quite thoroughly.

The Nature of Perception: *Vaiduṣya* vs. *Avaiduṣya*

Focusing first on the fundamental activity of perception, Jīva Gosvāmin analyzes the many ways in which sentient human beings are capable of interacting with various possible objects of knowledge. First, Jīva upholds the earlier

Vedāntic distinction between 1) external perception and 2) internal perception. The former corresponds to perception as achieved through each of the five physical senses. Thus, there are five forms of external perception. In addition to these, there is the means of internal perception (*mānasa-pratyakṣa*), which is *manas*, or mind. Whenever we experience such non-tactile emotions as love, hate, sympathy, pleasure and pain, we are perceiving these with the internal sensory instrument of *manas*. This leads to a total of six tools of perception.

Additionally, in agreement with the Nyāya (logician) philosophers, Jīva says that these six tools can each be of two distinct types, a) determinate (*savikalpaka*) and b) indeterminate (*nirvikalpaka*), or that perception which either includes or excludes relations, respectively. This doubles the six modes of perception, giving us now twelve. The final distinction that Jīva makes is between *avaiduṣya* perception and *vaiduṣya* perception. It is at this juncture in our exploration of the epistemological theory of Vedānta that the specific cognitive conditions for śābdic transmission can begin to be directly investigated.

Vaiduṣya Perception: According to Monier-Williams' *San-*

skrit/English Dictionary, the word *vaiduṣya* denotes "learning, erudition, science." *Vaiduṣya* refers to that perception of wisdom that is free from any tinge of material imperfection.[81] It is immune to all of the defects and errors inherent within the non-śābdic *pramāṇas*, such as the four deficiencies of *bhrama* (illusion), *pramāda* (inattentiveness), *vipralasā* (the impulse to deceive) and *karaṇāpāṭaka* (insufficiency of the senses). By *vaiduṣya*, Jīva is specifically referring to the ability to perceive the noumenal, the "...integral knowing which gives us the genuine knowledge of the reality...". (Mahanamabrata, 103)

Vaiduṣya perception itself forms the cognitive basis of *śabda* - divine transmission - since it is predicated upon a pure and reliable *a priori* source: the *samādhi* state of consciousness that was experienced by the *ṛṣis*, the ancient seers of the Vedic religion. "*Vaiduṣya pratyakṣa* is the basis of *śabda* itself", according to Kapoor, "being free from all kinds of error. *Avaiduṣya pratyakṣa* is liable to error." (65) As such, it is not a means of perception that the vast major-

[81]An illustration of this type of perfection can be found in the ninth chapter of the *Bhagavad-gītā*: *rāja-vidyā rāja-guhyaṃ pavitram idam uttamam pratyakṣāvagamaṃ dharmyaṃ susukhaṃ kartum avyayam*, "This is sovereign knowledge, a sovereign secret, the highest purifier, understood immediately, righteous, very easy to practice and imperishable" (9:2).

ity of human beings are experiencing on a daily basis. It is not normative human consciousness. Rather, it is a psychologically illusion-free, and therefore materially non-mediated, form of perception that is consciously and volitionally acquired through Yoga practice and the consequent spiritual attainment that follows such practice. Therefore, *vaiduṣya* perception of transcendent reality is radically juxtaposed with *avaiduṣya* perception.

Avaiduṣya Perception: Traditional Vaidika philosophers make an important differentiation between *vaiduṣya*, unadulterated knowledge, which is free from material imperfections, and *avaiduṣya*, or the mundane perception of ordinary knowledge.[82] *Avaiduṣya* is knowledge which is practicably useful on the phenomenal plane, but which is almost invariably capable of being vitiated due to one sort of inherent fallacy attribute or another. Interestingly, included under the general category of *avaiduṣya* perception would not only be Humean “Matters of Fact,” or contingent

[82] Allusions to this two-tiered distinction of knowledge are mentioned at least as early as the *Muṇḍaka-upaniṣad*, "There are two kinds of knowledge (*vidyā*) to be attained, the higher (*parā*) and the lower (*aparā*)." (*tasmai sa hovāca dve vidye veditavye iti ha sma yad brahmavido vadanti parā caivāparā ca*) (I, 1, 4) Though the context of this verse revolves more around a ritualistic concern than an overtly epistemological one, the philosophical point is nonetheless clearly apparent and applicable.

truths the denial of which do not lead to a logical contradiction, but also “Relations of Ideas,”[83] axiomatic necessities such as the principles of mathematics, geometry and the laws of logic, for which the denial of a valid proposition would lead directly to a contradiction.[84] Thus, for Vaidika philosophy, every form of temporal knowledge, ranging from the immediately factual (for example, the contingent proposition: “I am presently reading this book”) to the scientific (including the conclusions of such fields of inquiry as physics, biology, etc.), and including even the very laws of reason themselves, would fall under the category of non-*vaiduṣya*, or imperfect, perception. Real knowledge of the Absolute, being for Jīva Gosvāmin untainted by any imperfection (*amala*), can only be known by *vaiduṣya* perception.[85] Moreover, this perception must be

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[83] To quote Hume’s own brusquely stated criteria: “Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number? No. Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matters of fact and existence? No. Commit it then to the flames: for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion.” (David Hume. *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. L.A. Selby-Bigge. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951.)

[84] E.G.: “The bachelor is not a married man.” To deny the truth of this proposition would entail an absurd contradiction, i.e., that “The bachelor is a married man.”

[85] This view that knowledge can be seen as being of two distinct kinds - common and perfect - is not a thoroughly foreign notion, but is also found throughout the history of Western philosophy. For example, in Plato’s Symposium (I. 211, 11), Diotima makes a very similar distinc-

in the form of pure śābdic transmission.

The Nature of *Śabda*

The Sanskrit term *"śabda"* has several denotative and connotative meanings in the Vedic tradition. I shall first discuss the former in order to shed some further light on the latter. *Śabda* in its denotative sense literally means "word," "sound," "name."[86] In Vaidika philosophy there are two distinct forms of sound: 1) mundane sound, that sound which is heard through the organ of the ears, and 2) transcendental sound, that living and eternal sound which is transmaterial in origin, having Brahman (God) as its source and content, and which is not heard with the ear, but which is directly perceived by non-auditory, meditational means. Heinrich Zimmer, in his *Philosophies of India*, explains this distinction further. "Sounds heard by the outer ear are produced by 'two things striking together,' whereas the sound of Brahman is *anāhata śabda*, 'the sound (*śabda*) which comes without the striking of any two things to-

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tion between these two forms of knowledge in her conversation with Socrates. Similarly, in Chinese philosophy, we find a clear distinction between two forms of knowing described in the *Tao-Te Ching*: "Tao can be talked about, but not the eternal Tao."

[86] See V. S. Apte's Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary for a more exhaustive listing of definitions.

gether (*anāhata*)'" (Zimmer, 585). Mundane sound created as a result of "two things striking together" - and the words that originate from the mouths of human beings, specifically - are not considered to be a reliable source of metaphysical knowledge for the Vedic tradition. This is so because these sounds will only be as perfect and as reliable as is their source. Fallible beings create fallible utterances. Fallible utterances lead to fallible knowledge. Fallible knowledge falls infinitely short as a means of knowing the Infallible. Such imperfect words are termed *pauruṣeya-śabda*, or "mortal sound". As such, they are ultimately only capable of delivering knowledge of the temporal world - and even that, as we have seen, quite imperfectly. Satyanarayana confirms this:

> In its ultimate sense the term *śabda* refers to revealed knowledge about the transcendental reality that is realiable and free from defects. This kind of *śabda* differs from the language used in mundane transactions, called *pauruṣeya-śabda*, and is not always reliable.
>
> (Satyanarayana, 23)

On the other hand, *śabda-brahma*, the divine sound, is an eternal constant. What is not necessarily constant, however, is the human apprehension of that divine sound.

In addition to having its ontological locus in Transcendence, this divine, archetypal *śabda* serves as the very basis and primeval source of all posterior sound, including even the very grammatical structural vehicles of sound, the grammar of the Sanskrit language. In its eleventh *skandha*, the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* gives a detailed description of this process of the divine descent of sound:

> Just as a spider evolves (lit. vomits) out of its woolly cob-web fibers from its heart, the Lord in the form of *Hiraṇyagarbha*, through *Prāṇa* (the vital air) manifests Himself in the form of Veda. Essentially He is absolutely blissful. With the material of eternally abiding unstruck (*anāhata*) sound emanating from the cavity of the heart through the medium of mind, He brings out various sounds represented in the letters of the alphabet. The Lord who is the embodiment of the Vedic meters and essentially sweet (lit. nectarine), manifests out of Oṁ the *Vaikharī* form (of speech), which flowed out in a thousand ways beautiful with various sounds classified as consonants, vowels, silibants (Ś,Ṣ,S), semivowels (y,r,l,v). Such proliferated *praṇava* (Oṁ) became expanded in various languages and was characterized by metres each consisting of four more letters than the previous one, and is (in a way) limitless. The Lord who creates this unlimited Vedic speech,

also withdraws it within Himself.[87]

(*Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, 11, 21, 38-40)[88]

Mundane sound designates something other than itself. The fact that a specific liquid is referred to by the sound "water", for example, is a contingent linguistic fact, and not a necessary and unalterable referential reality. The name (*nāma*) and form (*rūpa; erscheinung* in German) of any material object are never synonymous. Transcendental sound and the transcendental referent to which it is connected, on the other hand, are one and the same. Due to having its originating source in the Divine, then, *śabda* is believed to intimately participate in the qualities of the Divine. As God is perfect, that *verbum dei* sound that emanates from God must also be a plenary perfection. Therefore, *śabda* contains within it the same purificatory, enlightening and salvific qualities as does the very omnisapient presence of

87 *yathorṇanābhir hṛidayād ūrṇām udvamate mukhāt/*
ākāśād ghoṣavān prāṇo manasā sparśarūpiṇā//
chandomayo 'mṛtamayaḥ sahasrapadavīṃ prabhuḥ/
oṃkārād vyañjitasparśasvaroṣmāntasthabhūṣitām//
vicitrabhāṣāvitatāṃ chandobhiś caturuttaraiḥ/
anantapārāṃ bṛhatīṃ sṛjaty ākṣipate svayam//

88 All translations from the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* that appear in this work are from the edition by Ganesh Vasudeo Tagare unless otherwise indicated.

God. Additionally, the grammatical vehicle of that very transcendent sound is thought to have been directly designed by a process of devolution, its inceptive source being Brahman and the devolutionary derivatives of which are the components of human language with which we are all familiar.

Both pre-Classical Vedic religion proper and the Classical Hindu tradition teach that, in contradistinction to the mundane empiric sounds with which we are all familiar, there is also a trans-stratum of spiritual sound, which is eternal, perfect, pre-communicative, and of the same nature of pure consciousness as is the Absolute. It is to this ontological reality of transcendent sound vibration that the connotative meaning of the term *śabda* refers.[89] Even more specifically, in the epistemological sense, the term refers to the direct experiential apprehension of that divine sound by the individual human agent under very specified, yogically induced psychological conditions.

[89] As observed above, the specific term *śabda-brahman*, or "spiritual sound," is sometimes used by Vaidika philosophers in order to make it unambiguously clear what is being referred to by the more general word "*śabda*."

Śabda as Word and *Śabda* as Experience

The term *śabda* must be categorically distinguished into two metaphysically conterminous, yet functionally distinct, senses. The first sense of *śabda* denotes the extrinsic Word as a vital, objectified source of revelatory informational content. The second sense of the term *śabda* is more imminently encountered in the subjective experience of the *yogin* (*yogī* in the nominative case) of the instantiated Word as the very *unio mystica* experience itself. The first sense of *śabda* is the Word itself, either in its eternally noumenal sense, or in the sense of *śabda* as it is manifest in written form. In this primary sense, *śabda* exists as an ontological Real, having its own inherent value. The second sense is *śabda* as the direct experience of the *yogī*. It is *śabda* in its second sense that is of primary significance in the revelatory process since it is in this second sense that *śabda* becomes epistemically operative in the most immediate sense. For, while the proofs of either a) eternal and transcendent *śabda* and b) written *śabda* may be epistemically accurate, they nonetheless still provide only an indirect knowledge of truth. Debabrata Sinha explains the distinction in the following manner:

> Cognition through word (*śabda*) is to be analyzed further in the steps of Vedāntic realization. Firstly, there arises from scriptural texts an indirect knowledge concerning the existence of the Supreme Being. There are texts declaring the latter as real (*sat*), as existing (*asti*). All that such existential statements yield is the assured, but still indirect, knowledge of Reality. In its lack of directness, it is no less mediate (*parokṣa*) than inferential cognition. It is only the generic aspect of existentiality (*sattvāṃśa*) that is primarily conveyed through scriptural texts, as also from ordinary words or inferences; but the specific context (*vyakti*) is not revealed thereby.
>
> (Sinha, 129)

It is the personal, dynamically transformative experience of *śabda* on the part of the individual *yogī* that is the aim of the *yoga* process, as well as the *via medium* through which eternal *śabda* is accessed within the realm of human agency.

Ṛṣis as *Āptas*: "Perfectly Reliable Authorities"

Perhaps even more important than the mechanics of śābdic transmission are the subjective qualities of the individual to whom the transcendent experience is being communicated.

Unlike the transient *pauruṣeya* ("mortal") knowledge of phenomenal reality, *brahma-vidyā* (knowledge of the Absolute) is not accessible merely as a result of the desire - or even the intellectual ability - of the observer. Rather it is accessed as a direct consequence of the personal spiritual purity of the seeker.[90] Since untainted knowledge of the Absolute is perfect, infallible and pure,[91] it follows that the vehicle through which such knowledge is revealed must of necessity also be of the same qualities as this *brahma-vidyā* (knowledge of the Absolute). Hare Krishna author, B.V. Tripurari, confirms this link between subjective spiritual realization and the objective realization of spiritual truth. "Proof of the validity of *śāstra* [the literary form of *śabda*] itself as a valid means of knowing lies in those who have realized its subject through the means recommended therein" (Tripurari, 40). Such human beings as above described are known in Sanskrit as a *ṛṣis*, or "...seers of the Vedic hymns...". (Monier-Williams, 226)

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[90] Additionally, according to the Vaiṣṇava (theistic) Vedāntists, the grace of God (*bhāgavata-prasāda*) is a necessary prerequisite for spiritual realization (*ātma-jñāna*), apprehension of the Absolute (*brahma-vidyā*), and the final liberation (*mokṣa*) that is the goal of all schools of Vedānta, and of the entire Vaidika tradition generally.

[91] The term "pure" is here referring to that state of being which is devoid of all non-spiritual, non-eternal concerns, hence not subject to falsity, change, diminution and error. It is a term that is rooted in qualitative ontology, not in relative value judgments. In this philosophical sense, the "pure" is that which is non-different from the "Real".

The *Ṛṣi* Phenomenon

The *ṛṣi* phenomenon is an instance of a human being who, through the allied processes of *yoga*, *tapasya* (vows of austerity), *sādhanas* (systematic spiritual disciplines), *bhakti* (devotional meditative absorption in God), intense meditation (*dhyāna*), and other esoteric means of systematic self-purification, has achieved absolute transcendence over the non-*ātman* (non-spiritual) aspects of herself. Having gained complete control over the body, mind, speech and senses, the *ṛṣi* becomes transformed into a being who is thoroughly absorbed in the spiritual Reality. Being thus absorbed, she has a direct and unmediated experiential connection with the truth. In the terminology of Yoga philosophy, such a state is known as *samādhi*, or perfect meditative absorption.

The *samādhi* state is one of enstasy, in which the individual undergoes the experience of standing within her true self and tasting the bliss of her own inner reality. From this trans-material, transcendental apperceptive[92] perspective

[92] In the case of the *ṛṣi*, we must use the term "apperceptive" in both the psychological and Kantian senses, in addition to the epistemological sense. Psychologically, the residuum of previous experience

within the *samādhi* state, the *yogī* and the Absolute - the subjective experiencer and the transcendent object of the experience - become intimately reunited. “Experience is synonymous with reality”, says Mahanamabrata, “which is to be analyzed, synthesized and plunged into, so that its ultimate nature may be immediately apprehended.” (3) There are two different levels of *samādhi* that the *yogī* undergoes in her attempt to realize the ultimate truth. The first of these is *savikalpa-samādhi*, in which the *yogī* begins to identify with the essence of the Absolute. At the highest stage of *savikalpa-samādhi*, one is able to attain the realization of one’s own primal substratum, which is composed of *saccidānanda* (*sat*, *cit* and *ānanda*), or unadulterated consciousness qualified by the attributive qualities of never-ending being, cognizance and bliss. In the second stage of *samādhi*, known as *nirvikalpa-samādhi*, the *yogī* achieves complete identification with her true self, *ātman*, and has direct *praesentia dei* perception of Parabrahman, the Supreme Godhead. This is an experience that is described as being situated beyond the delimiting modes of time and

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through which the *ṛṣi* apperceives present reality is very secifically an eternal and transcendent referent, and not merely the memories and/or impressions (*saṃskāras*) contained in mind-substance (*citta*) as residual data. Philosophically, the *ṛṣi*'s apperception is akin with Kant's notion of the unchangeable consciousness that serves as the necessary condition for the perceiver's unitary experience. Please refer to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* for his views on "transcendental apperception".

space, thus utterly transcendental in content.[93] In the immediate aftermath of this radical ontological shift in the *yogī*'s subjective *locus*, a complete transformation of her consciousness subsequently ensues. The externally observable ramifications of the *samādhi* phenomenon on the subject (the *yogī/ṛṣi*) are two-fold. One is psychological in nature, the other epistemological.

The psychological and cognitive impact of the *samādhi* phenomenon is radically transformative in nature. This transformation that occurs within the *yogī* (soon to be *ṛṣi*) affects her on a variety of levels, including intellectual, mental, emotional, nervous, and ethical. For the sake of remaining firmly situated within the epistemic bounds of the present work, however, we will focus primarily on the cognitive modification that takes place in the psyche of the *ṛṣi* (seer).

Because the *ṛṣi* has conquered the demands of the ego, she is no longer subject to the four imperfections of *bhrama* (the tendency toward illusion), *pramāda* (inattentiveness), *vipralasā* (the desire to cheat) and *karaṇāpāṭava* (insufficiency of the senses) put forth by Jīva in his critique of

[93] Patañjali refers to these two forms of *samādhi* in his *Yoga-sūtras* as *saṃprajñāta* and *asaṃprajñāta*, respectively. (1:17-18)

pratyakṣa and *anumāna*. The *Bhagavad-gītā* explains this state in the following manner.

> He whose mind is not affected in sorrow
> and is free from desire in pleasure
> and who is without attachment, fear, or anger -
> he is called a sage of steady insight (*sthita-dhī*).[94]
>
> (2.56, Georg Feuerstein trans.)

Since her knowledge of the truth is derived via direct, non-mediated transmission - from Brahman (God) to *ātman* (soul) - completely bypassing the customary intermediary routes of the senses, mind, intellect and ego, *karaṇāpāṭava* (insufficiency of the senses) is averted. Empirical and rational instruments simply are no longer employed in this instance. Therefore, their perfection, or lack thereof, is rendered a thorough non-issue. Additionally, because she is no longer under the illusion that her self-interest is of any superior value to the ultimate spiritual interest of all other beings, the defect of *vipralasā* (the desire to cheat), also, no longer applies. The ultimate interest of all other living beings is now her supreme interest. Thus the *āpta* (reliable person) is a perfectly moral being, acting from

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94 *duḥkheṣvanudvignamanāḥ sukheṣu vigataspṛhaḥ/*
vītarāgabhayakrodhaḥ sthitadhīr munir ucyate//

and in goodness, not due to a mere sense of necessitating duty, but out of her own intrinsic ātmic (spiritual) nature.[95] Having attained a state of *dhāraṇā*, or perfect concentration, she is not subject to *pramāda* (inattentiveness). Being thoroughly absorbed in the loving contemplation (*upāsanā*) of Brahman, her attention is perfectly and effortlessly alert, never diverted and ever-focused. Finally, having transcended the firm grip of *māyā* (illusion) altogether, the tendency of *bhrama* (the tendency toward illusion) is nothing more than a faint memory for the *ṛṣi*.

Having thus risen above all the defective tendencies of the mundane cognitive processes, the *ṛṣi* is seen, by both Jīva Gosvāmin and by the vast majority of philosophers within the *Sapta-darśana* (seven schools of Vaidika philosophy) tradition, as the most indisputable source of knowledge. The *ṛṣi* is not merely an intellectual who attempts to grasp

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[95] In describing a wholly good and rational being in a more Kantian sense, H.J. Paton inadvertently provides us with a vivid picture of the categorically transcendent ethical nature of such a morally perfect being: "A perfectly rational and wholly good agent would *necessarily* act on the same objective principles which for us are imperatives, and so would manifest a kind of goodness just as we do when we obey these imperatives. But for him such objective principles would not be imperatives: they would be necessary but not necessitating, and the will which followed them could be described as a 'holy' will. Where we say 'I ought', an agent of this kind would say 'I will'. He would have no duties nor would he feel reverence for the moral law (but something more akin to love)". (Paton, 26)

the truth, captures it, and then mechanically teaches it to others. Rather, she is a transparent *via medium*, a clear window, through which transcendent truth is seen and directly experienced first-hand. She is a breathing example of truth in living, caring motion. In a poem created by René Dumal, we find a beautiful description of the transformative experience that the *ṛṣi* has:

You cannot stay on the summit forever;
You have to come down again.
So why bother in the first place? Just this:
What is above knows what is below,
But what is below does not know what is above.
One climbs, one sees.
One descends, one sees no longer, but one has seen.
There is an art of conducting oneself in the lower regions.
When one can no longer see, one can at least still know.

For Vaidikas (Hindus), the *ṛṣi* is no less than a living testament to the existence, nature, and power of God. It is for this reason that the *ṛṣis* are termed *āptāḥ*, or "perfectly reliable authorities."

Identifying the *Ṛṣi*

All this having been drawn out, a legitimate concern may then arise as to the practical identifiability of such an *āpta-*

ṛṣi (perfectly reliable seer). After all, anyone can claim to be a perfectly realized *ṛṣi* without this necessarily being the case in fact. How can we truly know that one person's cognitive aptitudes are any more spiritually attuned than any other individual's? How do we know if someone really is a *ṛṣi*? For the answer, we must revisit the idea, so prevalent in both traditional Asian philosophical systems, as well as much pre-Cartesian European philosophy, that one necessarily lives one's philosophical claims in order for those claims to be considered perfectly valid and demonstrable. One's philosophy must be lived, not merely speculated upon. We must ascertain the true identity of an *āpta* by examining the behavioral modalities of the person under question.

Even within the familiar confines of our modern Euro-American scientific paradigm, the process of identifying and categorizing existents in accordance with their inherent attributes, properties, and effects is recognized as being a perfectly legitimate course of action in determining the inherent nature of the existent under consideration. The identification of an object as being fire, for example, is due to said object exhibiting the qualities of heat, brilliance, the ability to burn, etc. Moreover, the observation of such at-

tributes - or effects - must be replicable in similarly designed circumstances. In a remarkably similar manner, there are a number of recognized behavioral characteristics which are traditionally and scripturally attributed to an *āpta*, the necessary presence of which objectively confirms the identity of a person as being decidedly āptic in nature, and the absence of which render any such claims to be void of validity.

Illustrations of the uncommon personalities, behaviors, and activities of perfected *āptas*, as well as rather detailed and comprehensive listings of their personal quality traits, are given in many of the sacred scriptures and ancillary texts of the Vaidika tradition. A very detailed catalogue of these distinguishing attributes is given in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, for example.

> The Lord said: Fearlessness, purity of being, steadfastness in the yoga of wisdom, charity, self-control and sacrifice, study of the Veda, austerity, uprightness, non-violence, truth, absence of anger, renunciation, peace, absence of guile, compassion towards beings, absence of covetousness, gentleness, modesty, absence of fickleness, majesty, forgiveness, fortitude, purity, absence of malice and excessive pride - these are the endowments of one who is born with the di-

vine nature, O Bhārata.[96]

(*Bhagavad-gītā*, 16, 1-3)[97]

These are some of the many qualities that reveal the authenticity of the *ṛṣi* (seer, perfected *yogī*) as a valid source of knowledge. If a person is deficient in any of these distinguishing attributes, then her claim to being an *āpta*, and therefore her claim to have the ability to communicate perfect truth to humanity, is subsequently invalidated.

This is a foundational belief in Vaidika thought and is perfectly in concert with at least two of the presuppositions that I previously noted in the unique outlook of general Indian philosophy regarding the very nature and purpose of the philosophic enterprise. 1) Truth is designed to be experienced and lived, not merely thought about, and 2) the mode of consciousness manifest during the state of liberation from illusion and suffering serves as both the final goal

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[96] *Śrī bhagavān uvāca/*
abhayaṃ sattvasaṃśuddhirjñānayogavyavasthitiḥ/
dānaṃ damaśca yajñaśca svādhyāyastapa ārjavam//
ahiṃsā satyamakrodhastyāgaḥ śāntirapaiśunam/
dayā bhūteṣvaloluptvaṃmārdavaṃ hrīracāpalam//
tejaḥ kṣamā dhṛtiḥ śauchamadroho nātimānitā/
bhavanti saṃpadaṃ daivīm abhijātasya bhārata//

[97] Most *Bhagavad-gītā* translations that I use in this work are by Eliot Deutsch, unless otherwise clearly indicated.

(*ārtha*), as well as the ultimate methodological procedure (*upāya*), for any genuine philosophical endeavor.

In summary, a *ṛṣi* is a person who has six primary characteristics, one leading in a sequence of direct causality to the next. An *āpta-ṛṣi*:

1) has an immediate experiential perception of truth, coupled with an apperceptive ability to employ such pre-cognitive truth to present-day circumstances;

2) she is, consequently, positively and radically transformed in her very personality by that experience;

3) therefore, she is beneficent and compassionate towards all beings;

4) therefore, she has a desire to communicate this truth to all beings;

5) she then communicates this truth to all beings in the form of her own immediately validating personal example, in addition to her personal verbal testimony;

6) As a sixth and final potential development, periodically that sage will write down either a description, explanation, or account of her realization of truth. This writing will then be an instance of the manifestation of *Śāstra-pramāṇa*, or scripture as a valid epistemic mechanism.[98]

One more concern that could possibly arise from the concept of the *āpta-ṛṣi* is the very question of the possibility of the reality of such a being. After all, how realistic is it for a human being to be expected to perfectly personify all of the above stated qualities that are constitutive for an *āpta*? "I've certainly never met an *āpta*", the skeptic could very easily proclaim. The relevancy of such misgivings is quite negligible, however, when one considers the necessarily firmly demarcated scope of the philosophical project at hand. For in order to uphold the validity of the *ṛṣi* phenomenon as a reliable epistemic tool, the first and most immediate task required of Jīva Gosvāmin and the other traditional Vaidika philosophers is merely to show that it is in no way irrational to hold the idea that knowledge can be

[98] Two of many potential examples of this last process are the *ṛṣi* Vālmīki writing the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *ṛṣi* Vyāsa writing the *Mahābhārata*.

adequately derived via the process of *śabda*. And clearly, given the validity of the scrupulously outlined chain of arguments proffered by these philosophers, it is not.

In other words, Jīva's is neither a historical inquiry, nor a sociological/anthropological field-study, but an epistemological and a philosophical one. Jīva's task is not to display a living, breathing *āpta* for us to shake hands with in full empirically-fueled appreciation. In order to firmly uphold the *śabda* theory as a perfectly valid and viable argument, his only responsibility from a strictly intellectual perspective is merely to prove to an adequately sufficient degree the logical tenability of such a being existing. Additionally, he must show that if such a being ever had existed, then receiving knowledge from this being would be an epistemologically sound course of action. In my estimation, both points have been conclusively proven.

The proposition that such a being can possibly exist is neither a necessary falsehood nor in any way logically invalid. Therefore, such a contention can be perfectly validly upheld. Moreover, if there has ever been at least one such perfectly reliable person at any time within the bounds of human history, then the ramifications of this fact would be

to prove that *śabda* (Divine Word) as a source of knowledge is not only a valid concept in itself, and not only superior to other valid ways of knowing, but is a phenomenon of immediate personal, religious, and spiritual relevance for every rational human being. Achieving this latter task is, however, certainly not within the intended scope of this present work.

Chapter IV

Śāstra-Pramāṇa:

Scripture as a Valid Way of Knowing

Śāstra as *Śabda* in Literary Form

Śabda (Divine Word) is believed to be an eternal sonic reality, originating from Brahman (God), that is directly apprehended by the *ṛṣis* (seers, perfected *yogīs*) and which then becomes periodically manifest in the form of *śāstra*, or the sacred texts of the Vedic tradition, for the ultimate benefit of all humanity at all times of human history.

As David Knipe explains this unfolding of revelatory truth:

> ...these oral texts, regarded as unitary and eternal, are understood to have no human or divine origin. They have always been a sacred sound, Brahman, a foundational cosmic utterance. Somehow it was intuited by ancient seers, the rishis, an aggregate of seven sages who then transmitted the Vedas for the benefit of the world.
>
> (Knipe, 26-27)

For Vaidika philosophers - Jīva Gosvāmin included - *śabda* (Divine Word) is synonymous with Brahman (God) itself. Consequently, Jīva concurs with the Mīmāṃsā school in their doctrine of *varṇavāda*, which upholds the importance and the eternality of *śāstra* (revealed scripture).[99] Whatever perfections and attributes are present in the Deity, Vaidika philosophy holds, are necessarily simultaneously present in the sonic form of God known as *śabda*. Present in the Word of God is God Himself.[100] *Śabda* in literary form is *āmnāya*, or the "heard transcendental word" (Kapoor, 70). It is for this reason that the *śāstra* (revealed scripture), as the literary embodiment of *śabda*, is considered to be *apauruṣeya*, or authorless, self-existent and perfect. Julius Lipner presents an accurate account of the concept of *apauruṣeya*:

> ...the Vedas are rooted in Brahman's essence rather than in His will. Their periodic empirical manifestation (as of the world) may

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[99] This is not to say that Jīva is partial to the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā school. He merely agrees with them on this particular point, as do all Vedāntists. Jīva Gosvāmin is undoubtedly a Vedāntist in outlook.

[100] Anyone conversant with Christian theology - specifically the field of Christology - will, of course, immediately note the interesting parallels between this Vedāntic notion and the Christian claims expressed in the opening lines of the Gospel of John: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God". (New American Bible translation).

> depend on the divine will, but their content – their structure and form – by revealing the divine essence (so far as this is possible) is directly rooted in it and cannot change since the divine essence at heart is unchanging. In short, if the supreme being is to be revealed through language, it must be in the form of the Vedas as we have them.
>
> (Lipner, 10)

Both God and *śāstra* are co-eternal, both being without cause, and both co-participating in the essential substance of Divinity. This belief is especially instantiated in the view held by traditional Vaidika philosophers that the *ṛṣis* are not the imaginative creators of the śāstric literature, but only the revealers of the objective knowledge contained therein.

The eternal, divine Word of God, accessed by the integral trance state of the *āpta-ṛṣis* (perfectly reliable seers), becomes manifest in literary form in order for the greater portion of humanity to themselves have a connection with that liberating sound. Thus, Jīva's Vedāntic-inspired epistemology, somewhat akin - but by no means identical - to the Biblical concept of divine revelation, sees knowledge as more of a causeless gift from above than as a prize won through sheer volitional effort alone. Also like the Biblical

literature, the divine revelation, for Jīva and the Vedāntists, exists in tangible literary form.

Jīva contends that it is not practicable for human beings to attempt to attain *Brahma-vidyā*, or knowledge of the Absolute, without the aid of the *pramāṇa* of *śāstra* (sacred texts). In *anuccheda* 11 of his *Tattva-saṃdarbha*, Jīva states the superiority of knowledge derived quite specifically from the *Vedas* over and above *pratyakṣa* (empiricism) and *anumāna* (reason) in the following manner:

> Therefore, realizing that these (*pratyakṣa*, etc.) cannot serve as *pramāṇas*, let us turn to the Vedas themselves as we seek to comprehend that reality which transcends all and yet is the substratum of all, whose nature is incomprehensible and wondrous – to the Vedas, whose utterances have no earthly origin, being the source of all knowledge, both natural and supernatural, and having been handed down in an unbroken line of succession from time immemorial.[101]

In order to fully understand the epistemological significance of *śāstra* (sacred texts), it is crucial that we

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[101] *Tatas tāni na pramāṇānīty anādisiddhasarvapuruṣaparamparāsu sarvalaukikālaukikajñānanidānatvād aprākṛtavacanalakṣaṇo veda evāsmākaṃ sarvātītasarvāśrayasarvācintyāścaryasvabhāvaṃ vastu vividiṣatāṃ pramāṇam/*

understand that *śāstra* is in actuality nothing less than the eternal flow of *śabda* frozen and displayed in written form. Therefore, all of the qualities that Vedic philosophers attribute to *śabda* vis-à-vis *pratyakṣa* and *anumāna* can also be predicated of *śāstra*. In other words, both *śabda* and *śāstra* are greater means of knowing God in comparison to *pratyakṣa* and *anumāna*, and for the same reasons.

Empiricism and rationalism are considered reasonably reliable only when in accord with *śabda* and *śāstra*. "The other *pramāṇas* are rejected", explains Chatterjee, "to the extent that they cannot be employed as independent sources of knowledge for knowing that incomprehensible Supreme Reality, but they can, however, be used as *pramāṇas* subsidiary to *śabda*." (16) Even then, however, the results of empiricism (*pratyakṣa*) and rationalism (*anumāna*) as valid means of knowledge are only reliable when the two are employed exclusively within the bounds of their intended use, i.e., the realms of sensory input and cognitive speculation, respectively. Varadachari describes the integral relationship between the three *pramāṇas* under discussion in the following way:

> ...facts of the objective world are given to the embodied soul through perception; relations,

> general and particular, between these facts are inferred or seen by the activity of thought or intellection, *vikalpa*, and with the help of *vyāpti*, invariable concomitance and memory. The highest knowledge is attained neither by perceptions through sense, which are particulars, nor by inference, which present generalizations as such, but only by supersensory perception or intuition.
>
> (24)

Thus, Vedāntic epistemology proffers a hierarchically defined, yet functionally integrated, relationship between the three *pramāṇas* in question.

Interestingly, limitations are not placed upon the *pramāṇas* of *pratyakṣa* (empiricism) and *anumāna* (reason) alone. Like these two less reliable forms of learning, even the limits of *śāstra*, too, are firmly and clearly laid out. Those subject matters and facts that are readily knowable by means other than *śāstra* are not considered to be the subject matter of the śāstric literature. Therefore, they are not thought to be in conflict with *śabda*. The domain of *śāstra* is limited to knowledge that cannot be easily derived by any other means of knowing. Thus, how to create fire, or how to boil rice, or the means of adding numbers to find a total are not meant to be discovered via *śāstra*, since the

answers to these questions can be easily discovered via either empirical experimentation or by using one's reasoning faculties. Such knowledge is not *śāstra*-dependent.

Śāstra (sacred texts) is a mechanism specifically designed for discovering the answers to questions that cannot be answered via either empiricism or rationalism alone. Among many other subject headings, actual *śāstra*-dependent knowledge includes cosmological, metaphysical, ontological and salvific information, the sacred stories (*divya-kathā*)[102] of the *ṛṣis* (seers of Truth), *devas* and *devīs* (masculine and feminine divinities, respectively), as well as

[102] The terms "myth", "mythological", "mythical", etc., are terms that are generally derogatory and negative in connotation. In both academic, as well as in common contemporary usage, these terms tend to designate something that is specifically false, untrue or a lie. Given the derogatory nature of these terms, they should not be used to describe the sacred stories of any religious tradition. In order to ensure proper objectivity and accuracy when studying and communicating the beliefs, attitudes and world-view of any living religion (or even a "dead" religion for that matter), it is crucial that scholars of religion display the maximal extent of respect and sensitivity to the object of their investigation. It is in keeping with this objectively sympathetic approach that I decline to use the term "myth" in referring to the religious stories of the Vaidika tradition, and prefer to use the term *divya-kathā*, or "sacred stories". Whether one holds that such stories have any basis in historical fact, or are to be seen solely as metaphorical vehicles designed to communicate loftier philosophical ideals, or as something else entirely does not negate the importance of taking this more culturally sensitive approach. For further thoughts on the subject of the unnecessarily polemic use of academic terminology, see my paper called "Word As Weapon: The Polemically Charged Use of Terminology in Euro-American Discourse on Hinduism".

more seemingly practical knowledge that, despite their apparent earthiness, cannot be straightforwardly discovered via non-śāstric *pramāṇas*.[103] The task of *śāstra*, from this broader perspective, can arguably be seen as being of a supplemental nature. More accurately, however, non-śābdic forms of knowledge are themselves accepted as supplementary (however flawed they may potentially be) information not to be found in *śāstra*. Human-derived knowledge acquired via either empiricism (*pratyakṣa*) or rationalism (*anumāna*) is subservient to God-derived knowledge (*śabda* and *śāstra*).[104]

Astoundingly, all forms of non-śābdic knowledge - including what many Euro-American rationalist, and even many skeptic, philosophers would consider unalterable laws of

[103] Several examples of these more worldly śābdic arts are the medical science of *Āyurveda* (revealed śābdically by Dhanvantarī, an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu), *Śilpa-śāstra* and *Vāstu-śāstra* (manuals on sacred architecture), and *Artha-śāstra*, the science of politics and economics. What makes these śāstrically derived fields of knowledge different from their more mundane counterparts is that the aim of each (in this case medicine, architecture and politics, respectively) is infused with spiritual purpose and power, being sciences which are in accord with the harmonious intentions of *dharma*, that is, those laws that are inherent within the natural structure of creation.

[104] On this point, Kapoor writes: "While, however, perception and inference must, by their very nature, be always denied access to Reality, they can be treated as valid sources of knowledge when purified by *Bhakti* [devotion]." (64)

reason - appear to be relegated by Jīva and other Vedāntists to mere contingent matters-of-fact when juxtaposed with the axiomatic truths of *Śāstra-pramāṇa*. The epistemic role that *śāstra* fulfills, then, is in revealing two distinct stratum of knowledge: 1) practical knowledge that, despite its material applicability, is nonetheless undiscoverable via the other *pramāṇas*, and 2) truths pertaining directly to the Eternal, including the nature, means and goal of *mokṣa*, or personal liberation. While Vedic culture has always placed great value in the former matters of inquiry, however, it is without doubt the latter that has historically occupied the bulk of concern of the greatest thinkers of Vedic culture.

Śāstra itself covers a vast canon of works, indeed, with at least as many topics, areas of concern and literary styles as there are titles. While the totality of this enormous array of sacred texts has been variously called "the Vedic literature," "the Hindu scriptures," "the Sacred Works of India" and other such non-textually based titles, in keeping with the decidedly epistemological focus of this work, I have chosen to refer to them simply (and more accurately) as *Śāstra-pramāṇa*, or that valid means of knowledge which derives truth through the literary form of *śabda*. The enormity of

this collection of works might be more ably grasped with the assistance of a visual presentation of them. In the following chart, I have illustrated only a few of the more important genres of *Śāstra-pramāṇa* that are accepted specifically by the Gauḍīya tradition of Jīva Gosvāmin.

The Śāstra-Pramāṇa [105]

(As accepted by the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava School)

Śruti

(What is Heard)

1) **Vedas**: *Ṛg*, *Sāman*, *Atharva*, *Yajus*.
2) **Brāhmaṇas** (ritual texts).
3) **Āraṇyakas** (ritual and philosophical texts).
4) **Upaniṣads** (philosophical texts).

Smṛti

(What is Remembered)

1) **Itihāsas** (historical epics): a) *Mahābhārata*. b) *Rāmāyaṇa*, the story of Rāma, who is an *avatāra* (incarnation) of God.
2) **Purāṇas** (history of ancient events): 18 *Mahā-purāṇas*,

[105] Ultimately, for Jīva Gosvāmin, any text that is considered to have been revealed by a *ṛṣi*, or which upholds the Vaiṣṇava conception of Radical Theocentrism - and most especially, any text that even remotely seems to support the sectarian Gaudīya Vaiṣṇava notion that Kṛṣṇa is Himself the supreme Godhead and source of all other manifestations of God - is considered to be a sacred text. Consequently, for example, under the heading "Kāvya", Jīva would include the *Gītā-govinda* by Jāyadeva as a scripture because it is a text glorifying Kṛṣṇa, but he would not include the works of Kalidāsa as accepted scripture, since they are of a somewhat more secular nature.

18 minor *Purāṇas*.

3) **Sūtras** : Terse philosophical documents. For example: *Brahma-sūtras*, *Yoga-sūtras*, etc.
4) **Dharma Śāstras**: A collection of books concretizing the laws of Dharma in everyday life. These works contain ethics, laws, codes of righteous conduct, etc.
5) **Pāñcarātra Texts**: Ritual texts that contain teachings pertaining to temple ritual, worship (*pūjā*), ritual sacrifice (*yajña*), Deity (*mūrti*) installation, meditation, etc. These texts are especially held sacred by Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva and Śakta schools of the Vaidika tradition.
6) In addition to the above, very partial, list, there are literally hundreds of other Ancient Vaidika texts dealing with every subject ranging from medicine (*āyurveda*) to politics (*Artha-śāstra*), economics, astronomy, astrology, and physics that are considered authoritative texts.

Supplementary Works

(Non-śābdic, yet authoritative works)

1) **Bhāṣyas**: The commentaries of the Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* on many of the above works.
2) **Kāvyas**: Poems written by inspired Vaiṣṇava authors.
3) **Tantras**: Mystical and ritual texts dealing with philoso

phy, *yoga*, *mudrā*, *yantra*, *pūjā*, etc.

4) **Kathās**: Stories, many containing vivid folk elements, which convey Dharmic values, ethics and world-view. These include such works as the *Pañcatantra*, *Hitopadeśa*, etc.

5) **Hagiographic materials**: Many biographies of great Vaiṣṇava saints, *ācāryas* and *yogīs*; for example, the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (16th Century C.E.) of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja.

All of the śābdic works listed above, with the exception of a small number of the supplemental works, are considered by most followers of Vedic spirituality to have been revealed, and in some cases actually written, by one individual *ṛṣi* or another. For example, the epic *Rāmāyaṇa* was authored by the sage Vālmīki after having spent years perfecting his life by the recitation of the sacred names of Rāma. Similarly, the *Mahābhārata* was written by the *ṛṣi* Vyāsa after intense meditation. In some cases, a *śāstra* is actually named after the *āpta-ṛṣis* to whom its revelation is attributed. Some examples include:

> *Mānava-dharma-śāstra*: named for the sage Manu.
> *Kaṭha-upaniṣad*: named after the *ṛṣi* Kaṭha.[106]
> *Nārada-pāñcarātra*: which was revealed by the *devarṣi* (seer-god) Nārada.

Of all the many *āptas* encountered in the *Śāstra-pramāṇa*

[106] Unlike the case for Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, for the more orthodox Śrī Vaiṣṇavas, the *Kaṭha-upaniṣad* is not on a par with the other two texts. In fact, under the Pūrva Mimāṃsā *sūtra* "*akhya, pravāchanat*", Śabara, et al., state that Kaṭha and other *ṛṣis* merely did a *pravāchana*, or recitation, of the *Kaṭha-śākhā*. Also for more orthodox Vaiṣṇavas, while the *Pāñcarātras* are at par with the *Vedas*, the same cannot be said of the text of Manu, even though it is said to have been 'revealed' to Brahmā and then passed onto Manu.

literature, the most well known - and if all the works attributed to him were indeed written by him, certainly the most prolific - is the *ṛṣi* Vyāsa. In addition to the one hundred thousand couplet long *Mahābhārata* epic, Vyāsa is said to have produced the highly enigmatic *Brahma-sūtras* and all of the *Mahā-purāṇas*.[107] Most significantly for Jīva Gosvāmin, as we will later see, he is also viewed as being the author of the famous *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, the most authoritative scripture for the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition, of which Jīva Gosvāmin is very consciously a follower.

What is the Most Authoritative Form of Literary *Śabda*?

The *Śāstra-pramāṇa* covers a very wide spectrum of subjects and ideas. Almost no topic of philosophical, cosmological, cosmogonal, theological or metaphysical import lies outside its scope. Even within a single genre, there can cursorily seem to be contrasting opinions about some very fundamental philosophical topics. One well-known example of this seemingly intra-śāstric debate concerns the Upaniṣadic discussion about the true nature of Brahman vis-à-vis other ontological Reals. In some pas-

[107] Vyāsa is also considered by followers of the Vaidika tradition to be the compiler of the four *Vedas* (*catur-veda*) as they exist in their present form. Thus, he is known as Vedavyāsa to Vaidika philosophers.

sages there is clear support for the notion that Brahman is ultimately a personal being, distinct from both the plurality of individual *ātmans*, as well as the realm of matter.[108] Conversely, other verses seem to indicate that this very same Brahman is amorphous and non-distinct from the world and the *ātman*. Among these apparently more monistic Upaniṣadic teachings are the famous *Mahāvākyas*, or "Great Sayings", such as: *tat tvam asi,* [109] "that thou art"; *ahaṃ brahmāsmi,*[110] "I am Brahman"; and *ayam ātmā brahman,*[111] "This self is Brahman". With such a vast array of śābdic works at our disposal, each containing such an enormous number of topics and perspectives, the logical questions to ask at this juncture are: Why is there such a seemingly wide differentiation of philosophical opinion between these different works, and which of these *śāstras* is the most authoritative? This is exactly the question that Jīva now asks and attempts to settle in his own very unique manner.

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[108] Two *Upaniṣads* - the *Īśāvāsya* and the *Śvetāśvatara* - are quite theistic in outlook. The former is sometimes considered to be a Vaiṣṇava influenced text, while the *Śvetāśvatara* is clearly Śaiva in outlook.

[109] *Chāndogya Upaniṣad,* 6.8.7.

[110] *Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad,* 1.4.10.

[111] *Maṇḍukya Upaniṣad*, 1.2.

Śruti and *Smṛti*

The many hundreds of śābdic works that comprise the collection of scriptures that I call *Śāstra-pramāṇa* can be divided into two separate categories. The first is known as *śruti* (or "heard"), and comprises the many works falling under the auspices of the *Vedas,*[112] *Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas* and *Upaniṣads*. All of these works are considered by Vaidikas to have been directly perceived by the *ṛṣis* (seers of Truth), and then memorized and orally transmitted by the *brāhmaṇas* (scholar-priests) for countless generation after generation previous to being finally written down. They are, therefore, sometimes considered to be of a "more sacred" nature than the works comprising the second category of *śāstra*.

This second category is called *smṛti*, or "what was remembered." *Smṛti* is a term that refers to an entire corpus of sacred literature that was remembered and handed down through the generations as a tradition of sacred history and stories. The *smṛti* canon includes six principle headings:

[112] Also known as the *Saṃhitas* or the *Mantra-śruti*.

1) The six *Vedāṅgas*, or “limbs” of the *Veda*.[113]

2) The *Smārta-sūtra*.

3) The *Dharma-śāstras*, or books dealing with laws of virtue.

4) *Itihāsas*, or epics.

5) The 36 major and minor *Purāṇas*.

6) The *Nīti-śāstra*, which include several collections of fables containing moral and ethical precepts.

Of all these many works, it is the Vedic literature proper, the works of the *śruti* canon, that are traditionally considered to be the most authoritative śābdic revelation by Vaidika philosophers.

Veda-śabda-pramāṇa

These philosophers are all in agreement that the *Vedas* represent a revelation that is *apauruṣeya*, or without author. Having never officially come into existence within the context of anything we might recognize as time, they are considered to be co-eternal with Brahman (God). Like Brahman, they are also perfect. “The circumstances that

[113] These are six disciplines that are considered appendices of the *Veda*. They are: 1) *Kalpa*, the rules that govern sacrificial ceremonies, 2) *Jyotiṣa*, or astronomy/astrology, 3) *Vyākaraṇa*, grammar, 4) *Nirukta*, Sanskrit etymology, 5) *Chandas*, metre, 6) *Śikṣā*, correct phonetics.

render an ordinary verbal testimony invalid", S.C. Chakravarti explains, "or cause the ascertainment of its invalidity, do not exist in the case of the Vedas, for the Vedas were not composed by anybody" (Chakravarti, 15). The important Vedic commentator, Sāyaṇa, explains that the *Veda* contains unimpeded power (*akunṭhita-śakti*), and thus has the ability to establish its own validity, in addition to establishing the validity of things extrinsic to it. In the minds of classical Vaidika philosophers, however, it is not merely due to their śābdic literary content that epistemic significance is bestowed upon the *Vedas*, but specifically due to their sonic impact.

On the auditory and literary levels, the *Vedas* contain several items, including hymns to the gods, incantations, as well as theological and cosmological teachings. It is on the more subtle sonic level, however, that the *mantras* of the *Veda* are known to affect their most significant impact. As has been noted by many contemporary scholars of Vedic religion[114], the actual prosaic content of the *Vedas* are considered to be of secondary importance for Vaidikas. According to Thomas J. Hopkins:

[114] Most notably Fritz Staal, Harold Coward, and Guy Beck. See my bibliography for their respective works.

> Sanskrit words were not just arbitrary labels assigned to phenomenon; they were the sound forms of objects, actions, and attributes, related to the corresponding reality in the same way as visual forms, and different only in being perceived by the ear and not by the eye.
>
> (Hopkins, 20)

It is both the compositional structure of the literary *śabda*, and the consequent psycho-spiritual effects on the speaker and hearer that are produced by the recitation of the Vedic *mantras*, that are of primary importance for the seeker of liberation.[115]

Partly as a result of this perceived salvific efficacy of the Vedic *mantras*, as well as due to the vast antiquity of these works, the *Vedas* have traditionally been awarded a very high place of honor among the many works contained in the *Śāstra-pramāṇa* canon. Indeed, the consensus among the overwhelming majority of Vaidika scholars throughout history has been that the *Vedas* are a more complete, and

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[115] P. Chakravarti provides us with several philosophical axioms that provide a basis for the efficacy of eternal sound upon a hearer: "(1) Sound is eternal like space, since both are imperceptible to touch...(2) Sound is eternal and not liable to perish immediately after its utterance, inasmuch as it is capable of being given to others, as in the case of a teacher communicating words to his pupil...(3) Sound is eternal, as there is no cognition of the cause that might destroy it." (P. Chakravarti. *The Linguistic Speculation of the Hindus*. 1933, pgs. 82-83)

therefore superior, revelation when compared to the *smṛti* literature. While agreeing with the sacred nature of the *śruti* (Vedic) literature, Jīva Gosvāmin felt compelled to come to the defense of the *smṛti-śabda* - specifically the Purāṇic literature - as scriptural sources of comparable sacredness. This was a crucial sectarian maneuver for Jīva, for it was specifically within the contents of the *Bhagavata-purāṇa* that Jīva's teacher, Caitanya Mahāprabhu, had told his disciples that they would find the most esoteric teachings of the entire śāstric literature.

Smṛti-śabda-pramāṇa

It is in the twelfth *anuccheda* of his *Tattva-saṃdarbha* that Jīva begins to address the arguments of those who would ascribe divinity only to the śābdic utterances of the *śruti*; and he presents his case with a meticulous reexamination of the claims of the *smṛti* literature themselves. Jīva agrees with the mainstream of Vaidika philosophy that the authority bestowed upon the *Vedas* is due to their transcendent origins. This being the case, however, this same authority must be admitted of the Purāṇic literature, due to these literatures also having divine origins. "The *Itihāsas* and *Purāṇas* are non-different from the *Vedas*...", says Jīva,

"...inasmuch as both kinds of literature have no human author and present the same object of knowledge." (*anuccheda* 12.3, Satyanarayan Dasa, trans.). In order to support this contention, Jīva use several quotes from both *Itihāsas* and *Purāṇas* that claim the *smṛti* literature to be the "fifth Veda." For example, he quotes from the *Kauthumīya-chāndogya-upaniṣad* (7.1.2):

ṛg-vedaṃ bhagavo'dhyemi yajur-vedaṃ sāma-vedam ātharvanaṃ caturtham itihāsaṃ purāṇaṃ pañcamaṃ vedānāṃ vedam ityādi

"Venerable Sir, I have studied the Ṛg, Yajur, Sāma, and Atharva Vedas, and also the Itihāsas and Purāṇas, which are the fifth Veda."[116] He also cites the *Bhaviṣya-purāṇa*:

kārṣṇaṃ ca pañcamaṃ vedaṃ yan mahābhārataṃ smṛtam:

"The fifth Veda, written by Kṛṣṇa, is considered the Mahābhārata".[117] Jīva's claim that the *Purāṇas* are synonymous with the *Veda* is based on his belief that they at one time in history constituted a portion of the *Yajur-*

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[116] Additionally, verse 7.1.4. of the same *Upaniṣad* states: *nāma vā ṛg-vedo yajur-vedaḥ sāma-veda ātharvanaś caturtha itihāsa-purāṇaḥ pañcamo vedānāṃ vedaḥ*, "Indeed, *Ṛg-veda*, *Yajur-veda*, *Sāma-veda* and the fourth, *Atharva-veda*. The *Itihāsas* and *Purāṇas* are the fifth *Veda*".

[117] These previous two translations are provided by Satyanārāyaṇa Dāsa.

veda.[118] At a shear minimum, then, the *Purāṇas* must be at least as divinely inspired as are the *Vedas*.

Since these *Purāṇas* complement the *Vedas*, so Jīva's argument goes, they certainly cannot be different from them, since it is not possible for a complement to be absolutely alien from that item which it is completing. In order to further illustrate this point, Jīva offers the analogy of a broken bracelet made of gold. If a golden bracelet is missing a piece, it would not be prudent to replace that piece with lead or some other inferior material. Since they are of two thoroughly different qualitative natures, such an action would only lessen the worth of the bracelet as a whole. Rather, nothing less than a piece of gold should be used to mend the broken golden bracelet. Similarly, if the *Vedas* are not complete - and Jīva contends that they, indeed, are not - then only a literature of like śābdic nature can serve as a legitimate supplement, and not something of inferior value. Thus, the *smṛti* literatures must be on an epistemic par with the *Vedas*, according to Jīva.

[118] For further elaboration of this fascinating claim, please see Satyanārāyaṇa Dāsa, p. 54-57, and Stuart Elkman, p. 81-83.

Purāṇa-śabda-pramāṇa

Jīva Gosvāmin does not stop with this claim, however, but goes on to resolutely proclaim the actual superiority of the Purāṇic corpus over the *Vedas* (Chakravarti, 9). He offers several arguments in support of this rather unusual contention. Jīva feels that the *Purāṇas* offer a more complete account of the nature of transcendent truth, which the *Vedas*, to his mind, do not. Unlike the four *Vedas*, for example, the *Purāṇas* deal exhaustively with a) *ākhyāna*: legends that contain the five characteristics associated with *Purāṇas*, b) *upākhyāna*: ancient tales which make the significance of Purāṇic texts initially known,[119] and c) *gāthā*: varieties of meters dealing with *pitṛs*, *devas* and other divine beings. It is thus said by Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *gurus* (spiritual teachers) that the *Purāṇas* are *pūraṇa*, or "complete" in themselves.[120]

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[119] One example of *upākhyāna* is the dialogue that takes place between Śukadeva and Mahārāja Parīkṣit in the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*.

[120] Interestingly, both words are derived from the same verb root, *pṝ*, which means "to complete", "make full", "supplement". While the etymological root of both words may be similar, this fact alone, of course, does not necessarily support the theological claim that Jīva is making.

There are thirty-six standardly accepted *Purāṇas* altogether, eighteen of which are considered to be of major importance (*Mahā-purāṇas*), with the same number being traditionally designated as minor *Purāṇas*. While there is a great deal of diversity as to the foci, the philosophical outlooks, and the moods of these many works - even to whom each individual *Purāṇa* seemingly ascribes the status of supreme Godhead[121] - there are nonetheless several recognized common elements that are essential for a work to be considered a *Purāṇa* proper. Traditional Vaidika scholars have listed these topical areas as five in all.

1) *Sarga* - an account of cosmology.
2) *Pratisarga* - the destruction and consequent recreation of the world.
3) *Vaṃśa* - the genealogy of the gods and ancient *ṛṣis*.
4) *Manvantara* - the time periods linked to various Manus, or law-givers.

[121] Jīva admits the problem of the seeming diversity of perspectives among the various *Purāṇas* when he says in *anuccheda* 17, "...even though the authoritative nature of the *Purāṇas* has been thus established, the following doubts still remains: since the *Purāṇas* are also not available in their entirety, and since they are chiefly concerned with establishing the superiority of various deities, won't their meaning also be difficult to comprehend for modern man of meager intelligence?" Thus, many of the same "defects" that plague the *Śruti* literature are apparently to be witnessed in the Purāṇic literature as well.

5) *Vaṃśānucarita* - the histories of the royal dynasties descending from the sun god and the moon god.

If a work is missing even one of these five signature elements, then it is not considered to be a *Purāṇa* proper, and is classified into either another category of *śāstra*, or non-śāstric literature, accordingly.

Śāstra-pramāṇa and *Yuga* Theory

In addition to supposedly containing information that the *Vedas* do not, the *Purāṇas* are considered by Jīva to be more readily accessible to the degraded minds of the inhabitants of our present age - the *Kali-yuga* (Era of Discord). According to many of the *Purāṇas*, as well as other Vaidika scriptures, there is a continual cycle of four consecutive ages through which our universe perpetually traverses. These successive epochs are: *Satya*, *Tretā*, *Dvāpara* and *Kali*, respectively.[122] In an almost complete reversal of the much later Hegelian, Marxist and Social-Darwinian notion of a historical succession of ages neces-

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[122] The name of the four *yugas* appear for the first time in *Aitareya Brahmana*, VII, 14 (cited by Eliade in *Aspects du mythe*, Gallimard, 1963)

sarily marking the progress of human social attainment, according to the Vedic world-view, as human history progresses through each of these different decremental *yugas* (ages), civilization becomes increasingly impious and morally degraded. There is a qualitative degeneration of human virtue, piety, honesty, strength and wisdom as time progresses. The *Satya* era is considered to have been a Golden Age, a time in which the gods and humans conversed face to face.[123]

Among the more unpleasant symptoms of the present age

[123] Similar notions of qualitatively degenerating cycles of history are found throughout the entirety of the ancient world, as well as among most indigenous cultures. In India itself, Vaidikas, Buddhists, Jainas, and Sikhs alike all share this same view of history. Similarly, the ancient Greeks believed in five ages, the fifth being the Age of Heroes. Like its Vedic counterpart, the Greek epochs were correlated with the colors gold, silver, bronze and iron, each color representing the qualitative distinction of each age. The Hopis of America's Southwest also believed in this concept of four increasingly degenerate ages. Indeed, the only civilization to have taught the opposite of this Devolutionary Model, i.e., the Progressive Model, which says that human history has progressively led to greater expressions of civilized behavior, has been the Post-Enlightenment European, and subsequently American, world-view. In upholding this Progressive Model of history, the Euro-American view of history as social progress is actually both unique, and very much out of step with the views of the vast majority of civilizations throughout time. For a comprehensive analysis of the more ancient cyclical view of history, see Trompf G., *The Idea of Historical Recurrence in Western Thought* Vol. 1, University of California Press, 1979. In the 20th century, the scholars Oswald Spengler, René Guénon and Julius Evola presented an intellectual countercurrent to the maistream acceptance of the Progressive Model; as I am myself attempting to present in the 21st century.

we find ourselves in - the *Kali-yuga*[124] - are an increased tendency toward corruption by political leaders, a rise in un-dharmic and materialistic activities, and an increasing tendency towards intellectual lethargy on the part of humans, in general. It is this last fact, especially, that leads Jīva to conclude that the *Vedas* are simply too complex and demanding a set of *śāstras* for the intellectually challenged inhabitants of *Kali-yuga* to master. It was precisely in order to help remedy this situation that Vyāsa, in a mood of utter compassion for the fallen souls of our age, mercifully deigned to compose the *Purāṇas* and *Itihāsas* for the benefit of all beings on earth, as well as the Earth herself.

A Self-Validating Evidentiary Dilemma?

In our brief survey of Jīva's arguments thus far, it quickly becomes apparent that the manner in which Jīva attempts to prove his contentions appears to pose an evidential dilemma. Since many of the supporting quotes that Jīva finds contending the position of equal validity that he ascribes to the *Itihāsas* and *Purāṇas* are themselves drawn from the *Itihāsas* and *Purāṇas*, is this not a clear and vivid case of self-validation? Can we really trust statements

[124] *Kali-yuga* began at midnight (00:00), on January 23, 3102 BC.

claiming the perfection of *smṛti* texts which themselves are found in the *smṛti*? It certainly might be argued, after all, that it is in the interests of the authors of these many Purāṇic and Itihāsic works to claim that they were just as authoritative as the Vedic literature in order to try to gain widespread acceptance of these works by both the intellectual elite, as well as the masses of Hindu India.

However, from Jīva's epistemological perspective, he would not only be within his evidentiary rights to use such Purāṇic quotes to support the *Purāṇas*' authority but, in order to avoid the pitfall of self-contradiction, he would actually be compelled to do so. For Jīva, the *smṛti* represents the highest and most exhaustively authoritative *pramāṇa*. If it is true that the *Purāṇas* are indeed the highest *pramāṇa* afforded to *Kali-yuga* humanity, and if it were then proven necessary to look to another work extrinsic to the Purāṇic corpus for validation of the authority of this Purāṇic corpus, then this secondary work would itself be the more decisive scriptural authority. Given its overriding judiciary command, this secondary work would then be itself the highest *pramāṇa*. A severe problem then naturally arises. For this secondary work would, in turn, need some sort of external validation in order to establish its own in-

herent authority. Thus the search for a final validating authority would be extended on and on, stretching from one validating text to another *ad infinitum*.

Bhāgavata-śabda-pramāṇa

Having offered the *smṛti* literature as being the most appropriate śābdic lens through which to understand the truth, the next logical question that Jīva asks is: Which of all these thirty-six various *Purāṇas* offers the clearest insight into that truth? Since these works appear to be so varied themselves - some seemingly proclaiming the worship of Śiva to be of primary devotional worth, others Viṣṇu, Kṛṣṇa, or the great goddess Devī[125] - there must be some reliable way of differentiating which of these many different interpretations leads to the highest truth, and the highest spiritual attainment. For Jīva Gosvāmin, as well as

[125] Interestingly, while at a cursory reading some of these various *Purāṇas* may seem superficially to be proffering various *devas* and *devīs* as the Supreme Absolute, on a closer and more careful reading, it quickly becomes apparent that these various texts are all in agreement that Nārāyaṇa is the ontological source of all reality and the Supreme Absolute. While a specific *Purāṇa* may choose to focus its primary literary interest in, for example, Śiva or Śakti, this literary emphasis is not to be confused with the false idea that these respective *Purāṇas* are consequently claiming the Śiva or Śakti are God.

a number of predominantly North Indian Vaiṣṇava *saṃpradāyas*,[126] the answer to this question is the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*. This one specific scripture is chosen by Jīva from the vast range of Vedic revelation by a systematic process of qualitative elimination.

As previously discussed, it is already generally accepted that the *Purāṇas* can be distinguished between the major and the minor canons. This reduces the candidates for paramount *Purāṇa* by 50%, thus making Jīva's task somewhat less challenging. For the remaining eighteen *Purāṇas*, Jīva makes a categorical distinction based upon the notion of *guṇa*. The concept of *guṇa*, or "quality", probably finds its origin in Sāṃkhya philosophy, but was eventually accepted by the vast majority of Vaidika philosophical systems.

Utilization of the *Guṇa* Theory in the Search for the Scripture Par Excellence

According to this *Guṇa*-theory, *prakṛti*, the prime matter of which all non-ātmic existents are composed, originally existed in a serenely quiescent state of repose, knowing

[126] In addition to the Gauḍīyas, the *saṃpradāya* (lineage) founded by Vallabha, known as the *Puṣṭi-mārga*, or sometimes the *Rudra-saṃpradāya*, also accepts the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* as their highest scriptural and philosophical authority.

neither movement nor differentiation. The *guṇas* (modes of matter) are the three underlying qualities of *prakṛti* (matter). This triad of material modes consists of 1) *sattva* (positivity, goodness, wholesomeness, cleanliness), 2) *rajas* (passion, energy, movement) and 3) *tamas* (negativity, lethargy, darkness, ignorance). These three aspects of material energy exist as the very core of all empirical material phenomena. They can be seen as being three different modes in the spectrum of the one primary material substance. They represent the unitary material substance in three different, yet completely interdependent, frequencies or states. Every aspect of material phenomena that we perceive around us - including our own bodies and minds - is composed of a combination of these three *guṇas*, with one or the other of these three *guṇas* predominating. In Vaidika metaphysics, there is nothing in this world that is not composed of, and affected by, the interaction of all of these modes of nature, one predominating over the other. The *guṇas* also extend their influence over human beings by means of their *prakṛti*-composed material bodies. Thus everything in the material world is affected by the interplay of the *guṇas*. Before we can see precisely how Jīva Gosvāmin employs the concept of *guṇas* in his estimation of the various *Purāṇas*, it is important that we first under-

stand the difference between the three *guṇas* in depth.

We will now briefly examine the primary characteristics of each of the three *guṇas* (modes of matter). We will begin this exploration of the *guṇas* by examining the *guṇa* that is considered to be the highest quality: *sattva*. *Sattva* can be translated as "goodness". This *guṇa* denotes such qualities as purity, brightness, and essence. It is also light - both in respect to the luster of its radiance and in regard to its actual weight in terms of physics. Thus, individuals who are of a spiritual, clean (both physically and mentally, externally and internally), and peaceful nature are said to be living a *sattvic* existence; they are residing in goodness. *Sattva* is the quality most sought by all spiritual practitioners.

The next *guṇa* is *rajas*. *Rajas* denotes activity and movement. It is the mediator between the other two *guṇas*, as well as their empowerer. For without the kinetic assistance of *rajas*, neither *sattva* (goodness) nor *tamas* (lethargy) can act. It is *rajas* that motivates the individual to labor and that inspires work. Those persons in whom *rajas* predominates tend to be of a fiery and passionate disposition. While a certain degree of *rajas* is always necessary in order

to facilitate any sort of activity, it is believed that too much of this quality makes one restless, thus hampering meditation and other forms of disciplined spiritual pursuits.

When the material energy (*prakṛti*), through the medium of *rajas*, becomes turned to its lowest frequency, it is then known as *tamas*. *Tamas* has the characteristics of dullness, ignorance, and inertia. It is a dark mode, both intrinsically and in the consequences it inevitably brings about. Due to its heavy, weighted nature, it provides stability and forms the very foundation (*ādhāra*) of matter. *Tamas* is the source of obstacles, resistance and obstructions. *Tamas* brings about cessation. Those who are of a tamasic nature tend toward lethargy, procrastination and self-destructive behavior. It is the end point of the descent and devolution of *prakṛti*. It is, thus, the very antithesis of *sattva* (goodness). Those wishing to make any sort of spiritual progress seek to thoroughly avoid tamasic tendencies.

These three interdependent strands of the material substance are different aspects of the same material energy, which, according to Vedāntic philosophy, is in turn under the full control of the Supreme as the controller of all energies, including material energy. *Sattva* (goodness) is the

finest frequency that *prakṛti* (matter) adopts. *Rajas* (passion) is the intermediate catalytic energy source. *Tamas* (lethargy) is the resting place, the dullest mode of material energy. The qualitative hierarchy of the three *guṇas* (modes of matter) can be visually represented in this way:

The Three Guṇas

Sattva = goodness

Rajas = energy to act

Tamas = dullness

According to Jīva, since not all people are perfectly situated in *sattva-guṇa* (the mode of goodness), not everyone is capable of taking full advantage of that specific *Śāstra-pramāṇa* text that is meant to elevate humanity to the highest level of spiritual attainment: *śuddha-sattva*, or pure goodness. Therefore, the individual components of the Purāṇic literature are designed to aid people in their spiritual quest in corresponding accordance with each individual's predominating *guṇa*. The *Purāṇas* can thus be, themselves, divided into the three categories of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, with each category of literature meant to appeal to persons of the corresponding *guṇa*. In support of this

contention, Jīva says the following in his *Tattva-saṃdarbha*:

> ...the categories into which the various well-known *Purāṇas* fall are described in the *Matsya Purāṇa* itself, based solely on stories concerning the different *kalpas*; but what means can be adopted by which the relative importance of these *Purāṇas* can be determined? If we base our decision on the relative importance of the three *guṇas*, *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, then, on the strength of such statements as "From *sattva* comes knowledge" (*Bhagavad Gītā*, 14:17) and "*Sattva* is the basis for the realization of Brahman", we will have to conclude that only *sāttvika Purāṇas* etc. are capable of leading us to the highest truth.
>
> (*anuccheda* 18)

One intra-śāstric citation that seems to support of this idea of dividing the *Purāṇas* according to their guṇic functions is found in the *Padma-purāṇa*:

> Oh beautiful lady, know that the Viṣṇu, Nārada, Bhāgavata, Garuḍa, Padma and Varāha Purāṇas are of the characteristic of *sattva*, the Brahmāṇḍa, Brahma-vaivarta, Mārkaṇdeya, Bhaviṣya, Vāmana and Brahma Purāṇas are of the characteristic of *rajas,* and the Matsya, Kūrma, Liṅga, Śiva, Skanda and

> Agni Purāṇas are of the characteristic of *tamas*.
>
> (*Padma-purāṇa*, *Uttara-khaṇḍa*, 236.18-21)

Thus, the idea of classifying the *Purāṇas* in accordance with their gunic qualities both predates Jīva, and is śāstrically based. The Vedic literature holds that those *Purāṇas* dealing with Śiva and Devī are tamasic (lethargic) in nature, while those involving Brahmā are rājasic (kinetic/passionate). Only those *Purāṇas* detailing the activities of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa (God), His *avatāras* and His devotees are naturally sāttvic (goodness). These, then, are the eighteen *Purāṇas* coupled with their corresponding *guṇas*:

Sattva	Rajas	Tamas
Viṣṇu	*Brahmāṇḍa*	*Matsya*
Nārada	*Brahma-vaivarta*	*Kūrma*
Bhāgavata	*Mārkaṇḍeya*	*Liṅga*
Garuḍa	*Bhaviṣya*	*Śiva*
Padma	*Vāmana*	*Skanda*
Varāha	*Brahma*	*Agni*

As the *Sapta-darśanas* (seven schools of Vaidika philoso-

phy) all agree that sāttvic qualities are the purest, and therefore the most desirable, of the *guṇas*, only those sacred literatures that are essentially sāttvic in nature can deliver the highest spiritual knowledge.

Jīva therefore concludes that it is among the sāttvic *Purāṇas*, those *Purāṇas* that concentrate upon God in the form of Viṣṇu and His *avatāras* (earthly incarnations), that the paramount *Śāstra-pramāṇa* will be discovered. Of the eighteen *Mahā-purāṇas*, six are clearly Vaiṣṇava influenced. These *Purāṇas* are: *Viṣṇu*, *Bhāgavata*, *Nāradīya*, *Garuḍa*, *Padma* and *Varāha*. Of these, the purest vehicle of the Divine Word (*śabda*), in Jīva's estimation, is found in the form of the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*. "... for you have just described the very *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* which we consider to be the sovereign ruler of all *pramāṇas*.", exclaims Jīva Gosvāmin with great exigency in *anuccheda*, 18.

In order to prove this contention, Jīva delineates several criteria which a Vedic scripture must fulfill in order to be accepted as a perfect literary *pramāṇa*. These guidelines all fall within the parameters of Jīva's earlier conclusions:

1) *This perfect scripture must be Purāṇic in nature*. This

is because the *Purāṇas* are easily accessible to humanity, unlike the *Vedas*, which are written in a metaphorical, therefore less penetrable, style. The *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* certainly fulfills this criterion.

2) *It must have been divinely composed*. The *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, the tradition says, was revealed by Vyāsa, an *avatāra*, or incarnation, of God Himself. Therefore, its composition is free from human touch.

3) *It must represent all of the revealed scriptures in content*. This work, unlike any other *Purāṇa*, contains within its pages every subject matter touched upon in all of the other scriptures.

4) *It must be based on the Brahma-sūtras, the most important philosophical text in Vedic philosophy*. One of the beliefs of Jīva's Gauḍīya school of Vaiṣṇavism (theism) is that Vyāsa, the author of the *Brahma-sūtras*, also wrote the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* as his commentary on the former work. Consequently, not only is the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* considered by Jīva to be Vedāntic in content, but to be the ultimate com mentary (*bhāṣya*) on the *Brahma-sūtras*, having

been written by the very author of the *Brahma-sūtras*.

5) *It must be available in its complete form.* Which we know it is.

At least for Jīva Gosvāmin, then, the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* serves as the perfect literary *pramāṇa* (valid means of knowing), the preeminent *Śāstra-pramāṇa*, and thus as the most authentic basis for knowledge into the nature of the Absolute.

The Trance of Vyāsa: An Illustration of Śābdic Transmission

In addition to all of the above arguments that Jīva uses for the superiority of the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, he also makes the interesting claim that the specific *samādhi* (meditative absorption) experience that the *ṛṣi* Vyāsa underwent in revealing the contents of the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* was of a singularly unparalleled nature. The case for this claim is based upon three observations: 1) the technique of *sādhana* (spiritual discipline) that Vyāsa employed was

based upon *bhakti*[127], or loving meditative absorption in the Absolute. 2) The realizations of Vyāsa were of a more categorically comprehensive nature than anything previously attained. 3) The very ontological nature of Vyāsa as an *avatāra* (incarnation of God) - juxtaposed with that of the *jīvātmans*, or the individual units of finite consciousness which comprise the realm of living beings - affords Vyāsa a perspective that is perspectivally above and ontologically distinct from anything that humans are capable of achieving in terms of spiritual attainment. Jīva begins his analysis of the śābdic experience of Vyāsa in *anuccheda* 30.1 and continues through to 32.1.

The actual description of the *samādhi*-phenomenon that Vyāsa experienced is described in the seventh chapter of the first *skandha* of the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*.

sūta uvāca
brahma-nadyāṃ sarasvatyām

[127] More accurately, the form of *sādhana* most likely practiced by Vyāsa was *Upāsanā Yoga*, the *bhakti-yoga* system found in the *Upaniṣads*, the goal of which is one-pointed devotional meditation on the form and *proprium* attributes of God. Based upon forty *Brahma-vidyās*, or ways of knowing God, that are found throughout the *Upaniṣads*, as well as upon the teachings of such devotional *yoga* works as the *Nārada-bhakti-sūtras*, *Bhagavad-gītā* and others, *upāsanā* possibly represents the most ancient form of *yoga* known to history. For further analysis of the tradition of *Upāsanā Yoga*, see my work *Sanātana Dharma: The Eternal Natural Way*.

āśramaḥ paścime taṭe
śamyāprāsa iti prokta
ṛṣīnāṃ satra-vardhanaḥ

tasmin sva āśrame vyāso
badarī-ṣaṇḍa-maṇḍite
āsīno'pa upaspṛśya
praṇidadhyau manaḥ svayam

bhakti-yogena manasi
samyak praṇihite 'male
apaśyat puruṣaṃ pūrṇaṃ
māyāṃ ca tad-apāśrayam

Sūta said: On the western banks of the Sarasvatī, the presiding deity of which is god Brahmā (or which is resorted to by the Brāhmaṇas) there is a hermitage called Śamyāprāsa which encourages (lit. extends) the sacrificial sessions of the sages. Sitting in his own hermitage beautified by a cluster of jujube trees, Vyāsa, after touching water, concentrated his mind (as instructed by Nārada). In his mind purified by devotion and thoroughly concentrated, he saw at first the Primeval Being and (His power called) Māyā (Illusion) depending on Him.

(1.7.2-4)

The words "*bhakti-yogena manasi*" clearly indicate that the meditational technique that Vyāsa used was both devo-

tional and theistic in nature. This has special significance for Jīva Gosvāmin because, as a follower of the ancient Vaiṣṇava (theistic) tradition, Jīva would naturally hold to the view that the most efficacious means to achieve Vedāntic enlightenment is through the process of loving meditation upon the personal form of Bhagavān (God). In Jīva's case, this *persona deitatis* form is specifically that of Kṛṣṇa. Stuart Elkman, one of the only two translators of Jīva Gosvāmin's *Tattva Saṃdarbha* into English, offers some very good insight into the precise nature of the *samādhi* phenomenon when experienced via the process of *bhakti*:

> The term *samādhi* is used in Vedānta and Yoga to signify the steady and concentrated dwelling of the mind on a single object. In devotional literature, however, the term is used to indicate the absorption of the mind in a spiritual mood, wherein one communes with the object of this devotion, and enjoys visions and experiences, all of which are considered to be objectively real and to represent direct communication with the divine. Thus, the vision which Vyāsa had prior to his writing of the Bhāgavata is considered by Jīva to be sufficient grounds for classifying the Bhāgavata as revealed literature.
>
> (Elkman, 63)

As a theistic philosopher, Jīva naturally subscribes to the position that the most primeval aspect of Brahman is not the impersonal *nirguṇa* (without qualities) Absolute of the Advaitins, but Bhagavān, or God as an infinitely loving and captivatingly personal Absolute. The most efficacious process for realizing the *visio dei* experience of this Supreme Being, according to the Vaiṣṇava tradition, is through the *yoga* of devotional meditation, or *upāsanā*. He therefore places great importance upon the details of Vyāsa's specifically *bhakti*-inspired vision of the Divine Being.

In this vision described in verse four, Vyāsa is said to have experienced *puruṣa pūrṇa,* the "Absolute Person", in addition to *māyā*, the illusory principle responsible for assisting the *ātman* (individual spirit) to so intimately identify with non-*ātman* (matter). What is significant about this image is that the verse describes *māyā* (illusion) as being *apāśraya*, under the full control of the *puruṣa pūrṇa* (Absolute Person, God). For Jīva, this relation between the two elements of a) God and b) the illusory world, supports several contentions that are held by all Vaiṣṇava philosophers as being crucial metaphysical presuppositions.

The most immediate circumstance that this vision shows is that, contrary to what the Advaitins hold, God and the world are clearly distinct entities. This is shown by the clearly subordinate position of *māyā* (illusion) vis-à-vis the *puruṣa pūrṇa* (Supreme Person). As Vaiṣṇava Vedāntists interpret the significance of this distinction, the realm of illusion is seen as being a subordinate attribute of the Absolute, as opposed to being non-distinct from the essence of the Absolute. Vaiṣṇavas hold to the position that, while God is a unitary being (*ekatva*), He is yet a being who has distinguishable attributes (*viśeṣas*) and powers (*śaktis*). The power of illusion is one of these many *śaktis* (powers). Moreover, it is stated here that the "Supreme Person" has full control over this material energy. For Jīva, this reveals yet another of God's infinite attributes: *aiśvarya*, or the power of complete dominion over all existent things. As Jīva Gosvāmin states his position in *anuccheda* 34:

> Here, the phrases "*māyā* resting outside of him" (Bh.P. 2/7/4) and "deluded by *māyā*" (Bh.P. 2/7/5) indicate that the *jīva* [individual soul], even though, like *parameśvara* [Supreme Lord], being essentially pure consciousness, is nevertheless distinct from *parameśvara*.[128]

[128] *Tatra jīvasya tādṛśacidrūpatve 'pi parameśvarato vailakṣaṇyaṃ tadapāśrayām iti yayā sammohita iti ca darśayati//*

This power dynamic, in itself, would imply that there is clearly a) a controlled and b) a Controller. The distinction between the Absolute as the wielder of power, and the non-Absolute as the empowered of God, is another major tenet of Vaiṣṇava theism. The vision of Vyāsa is thus a *via positiva* discovery revealing at least several of the divine attributes of the Absolute, including:

1) A clear distinction of God from His attributes (which is itself arguably an attribute).

2) The ability of God to master illusion, thus displaying God's independent and omnipotent nature.

3) The power of sovereignty inherent in God's very *natura esse*.

The Ontological Status of Vyāsa

The level of depth of Vyāsa's experience can be further understood in light of the unique ontological nature of this being. It is believed by almost all *Sapta-darśana* philoso-

phers, as well as by all Vaidikas generally, that the life of Vyāsa represents an illustrative instance of the *avatāra*. The term *avatāra* denotes the incarnation on the terrestrial plane of the Unborn and Eternal. An *avatāra* represents the descent of God to the realm of phenomenality. It is taught in Vedic eschatology that at times of crises and dire circumstances, the Supreme Being, Viṣṇu, Himself descends upon the world in one of His unlimited forms in order to both alleviate the sufferings of the earth, as well as to re-establish the unadulterated teachings of Dharma, or the eternal path of enlightenment, to humanity.[129] Such recognized incarnations include the righteous God-king Rāma, the ferocious destroyer of demons known as Nārasiṃha and the speaker of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Kṛṣṇa, among many others. In the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Kṛṣṇa Himself provides a vivid description of the role and function of an *avatāra*:

yadā yadā hi dharmasya
glānir bhavati bhārata
abhyutthānam adharmasya
tadātmānaṃ sṛjāmy aham

paritrāṇāya sādhūnāṃ
vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām

[129] In addition, for many Vaiṣṇavas, and most especially Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, there is a third reason for God's descent. This additional purpose is to engage in "*līlā*", or loving sportive relationships, with His devotees. God comes to Earth to please His devotees.

dharma-saṃsthāpanārthāya
sambhavāmi yuge yuge

> Whenever there is decay of righteousness and a rising up of unrighteousness, O Bhārata, I send forth Myself. For the preservation of good, for the destruction of evil, for the establishment of righteousness, I come into being in age after age.
>
> *Bhagavad-gītā* (4: 7-8)

While it certainly is not the purpose of the present work to either defend or denigrate the *avatāra* theory, it is definitely within our scope to discuss the direct relevance of this theory upon Vedic epistemology.

It is believed that Vyāsa was one such *avatāra* of Viṣṇu, whose express mission was to preserve the Vedic and *smṛti* literatures for the present age of *Kali*. In *anuccheda* 16 of his *Tattva-saṃdarbha*, Jīva gives several Purāṇic references supporting the divine status of Vyāsa, and describing His specific mission as the compiler of the *śruti* and *smṛti* literatures. Here, Jīva attempts, in great depth of detail, to establish the unparalleled nature of the *ṛṣi* Vyāsa as an *avatāra* (incarnation) of God.

> As stated in the *Skanda Purāṇa*: “Others have

borrowed bits and pieces from the ethereal realm of Vyāsa's mind for their own use, just as one would remove objects from a house and use them."

The same idea is found in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, in the words of Vyāsa's father, Parāśara: "Then, in this twenty-eighth Manvantara, my son, the Lord Vyāsa, took the one *Veda*, consisting of four parts, and divided it into four. All the other 'Vyāsas'[130], and myself as well, (have made use of) the *Vedas* just as the wise Vedavyāsa had arranged them. Therefor, know for certain that the different branches of the 'Vyāsas' in the four yugas were created for this reason alone. O Maitreya, know that Kṛṣṇadvaipāyana (Vyāsa) is the Lord Nārāyaṇa himself; for who on earth but he could have composed the *Mahābhārata*?" (Vi.P. 3/4/2-5)

And in the *Skanda Purāṇa*: "In the *Kṛta Yuga*, the knowledge which had issued forth from Nārāyaṇa remained intact. It became somewhat distorted in the *Tretā Yuga*, and completely so in the *Dvāpara Yuga*. When, due to the curse of the sage Gautama, knowledge turned into ignorance, the bewildered devas led by Brahmā and Rudra, sought shelter with the benignant, refuge-giving Nārāyaṇa, and informed Bhagavān Puruṣottama [Nārāyaṇa] of their purpose in coming. And the great Yogin, the Lord Hari himself, descended, taking birth as the son of Satyavatī and Parāśara, and rescued the fallen *Vedas*."...

[130] The plural here is used merely to indicate the various disciples of Vyāsa, in addition to their teacher.

As an *avatāra* of the Supreme Being, Vyāsa's status is considered by Jīva Gosvāmin to be both ontologically and authoritatively identical with that of the Supreme Being.

The philosophical implications of this belief are several. First, the assumption of Vyāsa's divine status on the part of Vaidikas keeps intact the contention that the *Śāstra-pramāṇa* literature is a perfect source of knowledge, untainted by human touch. The compiler of the *Vedas* is accepted as a manifestation of divinity - the very professed source, subject and goal of these literatures. Since the Absolute is perfect and infallible, the *śabda* conveyed by Him is necessarily also perfect.[131] Second, the *smṛti* literature, as well, is to be considered as perfect and authoritative as the *śruti* texts, in at least Jīva's estimation, since their common compiler is none other than this same "Vedavyāsa", the perfect source of the perfect *śabda*. Finally, Vyāsa's identity as the incarnation of the Supreme Being

[131] This, of course, is barring the assumption that the Absolute would, out of His inherent ability to make free volitional choices, desire to deliver imperfect information about Himself due to malicious intent. There is no indication anywhere in the *Śāstra-pramāṇa* of His ever having desired to do this, however. Rather, the Vaidika scriptures insist that God is the source of all good. The opposite of good is necessarily non-existent in God. This being the case, it would be directly contrary to God's nature to foment evil or untruth.

seems to directly support Jīva's contention that the most authoritative member of the *Śāstra-pramāṇa* corpus is none other than the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, whose author is Vyāsa.

In light of this conviction concerning the infallibility of Vyāsa's words, in Jīva's estimation the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* is to be accepted as the greatest authority quite simply because the śābdic content of the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* - a recognized component of the *Śāstra-pramāṇa* - states that it is the highest authority:

> The venerable sage (Vyāsa) compiled this epic (*Purāṇa*) called *Bhāgavata*, equal in status to the Vedas, describing the deeds of him of pious reputation. For the highest good of the people, he (Vyāsa) made his son (Śuka), pre-eminent among those who have realized the Soul, receive this great (Bhāgavata-Purāṇa) which is the means of securing bliss.[132]
>
> (*Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, 1.3.40, 41)

Jīva feels that since the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* is a *śāstra* revealed by Bhagavān (God) Himself, then the statements of this work must, like Bhagavān Himself, be perfect. Since

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[132] *Idaṃ bhāgatavaṃ nāma purāṇaṃ brahma-sammitam uttama-śloka-caritaṃ cakāra bhagavān ṛṣiḥ niḥśreyasāya lokasya dhanyaṃ svastyayanaṃ mahat / tad idaṃ grāhayām āsa sutam ātmavatāṃ varam sarva-vedetihāsānāṃ sāraṃ sāraṃ samuddhṛtam/*

these perfect statements of the perfect being refer to the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* as being "equal in status to the *Vedas*", then given the self-validating nature of śābdic epistemology, it can not but be the case that this is true, using Jīva's logic.

While we may agree or disagree with Jīva's logic, Jīva is certainly not alone in his high estimation of the philosophical merits of the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*. It would be very difficult, indeed, to overestimate the powerful impact that this influential work had in the development of post-Rāmānuja Vaiṣṇavism. Commenting upon the unique ability of the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* to synthesize the qualities of many previous *śāstras*, Vopadeva (fl. ca. 13th century C E) states in his *Muktāphala*:

Vedāḥ purāṇaṃ kāvyaṃ ca
prabhur mitraṃ priyeva ca
bodhayantīti hi prāhus
trivṛd bhāgavataṃ punaḥ

The Vedas teach like a king,
the Purāṇas like a friend,
and Kāvya like one's beloved.
They state the Bhāgavatam, however, to be threefold.

(My translation)

In agreement with Vopadeva's assessment, Dr. Ramnarayan Vyas states the following in his *Synthetic Philosophy of the Bhāgavata*:

> The Bhāgavata occupies a very prominent position in the realm of Indian philosophy, religion and culture. The learned are full of admiration for it, as will be clear from the common maxim that states that the Bhāgavata is the touch-stone of learning (*vidyāvatam bhāgavate parikṣa*). Moreover, it has been considered a literary incarnation of God (*bhagavato vangamayavataraḥ*) - the highest tribute that can be paid to any lofty work of literature.
>
> (Vyas, xi)

Among the many intellectual and spiritual leaders of Vaiṣṇavism who were influenced by this *Purāṇa* are: Madhva, Caitanya, Vallabha, Svāmī Nārāyaṇa and Mirā Bhāī. Additionally, it is at the very least accepted as being a scripture of prime theological and philosophical importance by every *saṃpradāya* of the Vaiṣṇava (theist) tradition.

Despite its wide-spread acceptance and use by a broad variety of Vaiṣṇava communities, the relationship that Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas have established with this Purāṇic work

is quite unique in the Vaiṣṇava world. For Gauḍīyas, the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* represents nothing less than the written personification of God Himself; and more, the highest scriptural authority in creation. S. K. De has very correctly made the following observation:

> Other schools have also attempted explanations of the Bhagavata, but they have hardly gone to this extreme limit of basing their fundamental doctrines solely on the interpretation of that text. No doubt, the Bengal school, by this method has attempted to secure for itself the authority of one of the greatest and most universally revered religious works of medieval times; but this gain has been counterbalanced by the fact that its doctrines stand or fall according as the Bhagavata must be regarded as one of the fundamental postulates of this school, and even if there may be other interpretations, that of its own theologians must be unquestionably accepted.
>
> (De, 89)

Thus the Gauḍīya concept of *Bhāgavata-śabda-pramāṇa* represents an approach that is very unique and original, both within the context of the Vaiṣṇava tradition, as well as within the greater history of Vaidika philosophy and thought.

Jīva Gosvāmin's Claims to Epistemic Originality

The bulk of Jīva Gosvāmin's epistemology falls quite safely within the orthodox bounds of traditional Vedic thought. The foundations of his thought are far from original, and can be easily traced back historically to such schools as Ñyāya, Mīmāṃsā, Vedānta and Yoga, as well as to such individuals as Śaṃkara and Rāmānuja, as will be shown in the next chapter. In addition to these antecedenous dependencies, however, there are, nonetheless, several rather unique and original aspects to Jīva's thought. These are:

1) His acceptance of a total of ten *pramāṇas*, all subsumed under the three primary *pramāṇas* of *śabda*, *pratyakṣa* and *anumāna*. No one else accepts such a large total number of *pramāṇas*.

2) His insistence that the *Itihāsa* (epic) and *Purāṇa* literatures are on an epistemic par with the *śruti* literature.

3) His contention that within the entire corpus of the Purāṇic literature, the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*

> represents the most important and authoritative of scriptures.

In the next chapter, we will further explore the issue of the relative importance of these innovations, as well as any significant philosophical implications they might have.

Chapter V

A Few Problems

It is, indeed, true that the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* represents one of the most unique and highly philosophical works among the many Purāṇic texts. Additionally, Jīva's scriptural evidence supporting the *Bhāgavata's* preeminence is not without some merit. Despite these facts, however, there are several historical uncertainties, contradictory epistemic claims and philosophical redundancies that must be raised both about Jīva Gosvāmin's method and overall claim.

Intra-Darśana Historical Discrepancies

First, there is Jīva's claim that Vyāsa wrote the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* with the clear intention of this work serving as a *bhāṣya*, or commentary, on the *Brahma-sūtras*. He bases this opinion upon two contentions. The first is that one word contained in the *Gāyatrī-mantra*[133] is found in the

[133] First revealed by the *ṛṣi* Viśvamitra, the *Gāyatrī-mantra* is one of most important *mantras* found in the Vedic literature. It is found in all four *Vedas*. The *Gāyatrī-mantra*: *Aum bhūr bhuvah svaḥ / Tat savitūr vareṇyam / Bhārgo devasya dhīmahi / Dhiyo yo naha prachodayat aum*

beginning verse of the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*.[134] The significant word is "*dhīmahi*" ("let us meditate upon"). Thus, the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* is seen as a natural literary expansion of this famous *mantra*. Second, several passages from the *Brahma-sūtras* are also repeated in the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*. Jīva states his arguments in the following manner:

> Even after manifesting the complete body of the *Purāṇas*, and composing the *Brahmasūtra*, Bhagavān Vyāsa was still not content, and so gave form to that which serves as a natural commentary on his own *Brahmasūtra*, which was revealed to him in *samādhi*, and which alone illustrates the common significance of all the scriptures, as seen in the fact that it begins by referring to the *Gāyatrī*, characterized as a concise statement of the significance of all the *Vedas*. For its true nature has thus been described in the *Matsya Purāṇa*: "That is to be known as the *Bhāgavata*, which, basing itself on the *Gāyatrī*, describes *dharma* in its fullness, and which narrates the slaying of the *asura* Vṛtra. Whosoever will make a copy of this *Bhāgavata* and offer it away, mounted on a throne of gold during the full moon of Bhādra, will attain the supreme goal. This Purāṇa is said to contain eighteen thousand

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[134] *oṃ namo bhagavate vāsudevāya janmādy asya yato 'nvayād itarataś cārtheṣv abhijñaḥ svarāṭ tene brahma hṛdā ya ādi-kavaye muhyanti yat sūrayaḥ tejo-vāri-mṛdāṃ yathā vinimayo yatra tri-sargo 'mṛṣā dhāmnā svena sadā nirasta-kuhakaṃ satyaṃ paraṃ dhīmahi* (Bh.P. 1/1/1)

> (verses)." (Ma.P. 53/20,22)
>
> The word *gāyatrī* in the preceding verse refers only to the meaning of the *Gāyatrī*, contained in the word *dhīmahi* ("we meditate"), which occurs unchanged in the *Bhāgavata*, and thus directly indicates the *Gāyatrī*; for an outright quotation of this *mantra*, which is the prototype of all *mantras*, would not have been proper. The fact that the *Bhāgavata* has the same significance as that of the *Gāyatrī* is seen in the phrases *janmādyasya yataḥ* ("from whom comes the origin etc. of the universe") and *tene brahma hṛdā* ("who revealed the *Veda* [to the creator Brahmā] through his heart) (Bh.P. 1/1/1), which form identical explanations regarding the substratum of the entire universe and the ability to inspire the workings of the intellect, with those of the *Gāyatrī*.
>
> (*anuccheda* 19)

Thus, for Jīva, the inclusion of the word "*dhīmahi*", and the inclusion of two passages from the *Brahma-sūtras*, reveal that the author of the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* is secretly indicating his intention of making this work a commentary on the *Brahma-sūtras*.

However, if the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* is, indeed, Vyāsa's natural autocommentary upon the *Brahma-sūtras*, as Jīva boldly contends that it is, then why did Śaṃkara, the earliest ex-

tant commentator on the *Sūtras*, not mention or endorse this idea? Rather, he expended a considerable amount of time and mental ability creating his own unique advaitic *bhāṣya* (commentary). For that matter, even the great Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas*, such as Rāmānuja and Madhva, had seemingly decided to write their own commentaries on the *Brahma-sūtras*, rather than defer to an autocommentary by Vyāsa.

Jīva's attempted answer to this objection is rooted in the sacred stories of the *smṛti* literature itself. Quoting from the *Padma-purāṇa* (*Uttara Khaṇḍa*, 25.7), Jīva makes the case that Śaṃkara was in actuality an incarnation of Śiva, sent to earth to revive Vedic culture by presenting a crypto-Buddhist teaching couched in Vedāntic terminology. In the *Padma-purāṇa's* account of this incident, Śaṃkara is actually a disguised Vaiṣṇava dutifully following the orders of God. As such, any discussion of the *Bhāgavata* - the most intimate revelation pertaining to the nature of God in the entire Vedic corpus - was avoided by Śaṃkara out of reverential deference to God. Jīva does not address the question, however, of why even Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* (preceptors) did not acknowledge the fact that the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* was the most authentic *bhāṣya*.

The problem with Jīva's line of argument concerning Śaṃkara is very readily apparent. As an assertion based solely upon the sacred stories of the *Purāṇas*, Jīva's claim that Śaṃkara was insincere about his own teachings cannot necessarily be sustained from a critical historical or philosophical perspective. While this sacred-story-dependent argument can be successfully postulated within the context of śāstric scriptural evidence, it often holds little weight outside the bounds of a *Śāstra-pramāṇa* context, i.e., within a strictly philosophical context. For a defense of a śābdic-based philosophical claim to properly withstand the assaults of a non-*Sapta-darśana* philosophical critique (such as that of a Buddhist, a Jain, or a Marxist), it must be firmly based upon the strengths of either propositional validity, historical fact, or textual exegetical evidence - in addition to being verifiable śābdically.

Additionally, if this Purāṇic evidence were sufficient to explain Śaṃkara's actions and teachings in the face of the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa's* purported Vedāntic authority, then any and all of the attempts on the part of the Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* throughout history to refute Śaṃkara's philosophical arguments would certainly seem to be superfluous and

unnecessary. This story alone should suffice in showing that Śaṃkara did not really mean what he said, therefore why bother refuting someone who does not take his own claims seriously? This argument may carry weight from a purely śābdic criterion, but it could be argued that it does not work quite as well from a rigidly philosophical angle, or even from the angle of simple historical reality.

A second potential cause for unease about Jīva's conclusions regarding the preeminence of the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* might arise from the following line of reasoning. Traditionally, Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas (including Caitanya himself) have had a very high regard for Śrīdhara Svāmī's commentary on the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*. Yet this famous commentary is riddled throughout with overtly Advaitic sentiments. In *anuccheda* 27, Jīva makes it clear that the interpretation of the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* that he presents in his *Ṣaḍ-saṃdarbhas* is primarily influenced by two individuals: Śrīdhara Svāmī and Rāmānuja.

> Therefore, we will examine the *Bhāgavata* alone, observing the consistency between the earlier and later portions, in order to determine what is the supreme good. Here, in this composition of six volumes, the introductory remarks will occupy the position of sūtras,

and the words of the *Bhāgavata*, the subject matter. Our interpretation of the words of the *Bhāgavata*, representing a kind of *bhāṣya*, will be written in accordance with the views of the great Vaiṣṇava, the revered Śrīdhara Svāmin, only when they conform to the strict Vaiṣṇava standpoint, since his writings are interspersed with the doctrines of Advaita so that an appreciation for the greatness of *Bhāgavata* may be awakened in the Advaitins who nowadays pervade the central regions etc. In some places we will follow Śrīdhara's interpretations found elsewhere. In other instances, our interpretation will be based on the doctrines found in the writings of the venerable Rāmānuja, such as his *Śrībhāṣya* etc., adhered to by the Śrī Vaiṣṇavas, whose renowned saṃpradāya has originated from the goddess Śrī herself, and who are celebrated as great Bhāgavatas of the Draviḍa region etc; for as the *Bhāgavata* itself states, there are many in this area known as Vaiṣṇavas: "O Great King, some devotees of Nārāyaṇa can be found here and there, but their numbers are great in the Draviḍa regions." (Bh.P. 11/5/39) And in some instances, our interpretations will differ from both (Śrīdhara and Rāmānuja), and will follow the natural sense of the *Bhāgavata*. As the Advaita doctrines are well-known, they need not be delineated here.

(*anuccheda* 27)

Śrīdhara Svāmī was known to have been a *saṁnyāsin* (re-

nounced monk) in the *daśanāmi saṃpradāya*, the Advaita mendicant order founded by Śaṃkara. Jīva himself here acknowledges Śrīdhara's Advaitic leanings, and says that he will simply ignore these non-theistic statements of his as being inconsequential. This seemingly lackadaisical response to what is obviously a legitimate cause of concern is troubling. For if the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* is, indeed, the foremost *Śāstra-pramāṇa*, and if it consequently upholds the theistic conclusions so crucial to Jīva's world-view, then why was Śrīdhara's *bhāṣya* (commentary) upon it not overtly Vaiṣṇava (theistic) in philosophical outlook? Jīva Gosvāmin's answer to this question is somewhat reminiscent of his opinion about Śaṃkara's alleged "true" motivations previously discussed, but with a greater degree of historical and literary evidence to back up his claims.

Again, as with Śaṃkara, Jīva felt that Śrīdhara was a covert Vaiṣṇava at heart, merely playing the part of an Advaitin in order to attract the monists into the camp of Vaiṣṇavism. Unlike the case with Jīva's arguments about Śaṃkarācārya, which were based solely on the evidence of Purāṇic sacred stories, there seems to be some additional objective literary evidence to support this contention about Śrīdhara Svāmī. For, while it is true that Śrīdhara Svāmī's *Bhāvārtha-dīpikā*

commentary on the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* does contain several Advaitic opinions, this is not the case for his other *bhāṣyas* on the *Viṣṇu-purāṇa* and the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Those commentaries are plainly much more devotional and theistic in nature when compared to his *Bhāgavata* commentary (Tripurari, 93-94). This literary evidence, of course, provides no clear proof of Jīva's claim that Śrīdhara Svāmī wanted to slyly trick Advaitins into becoming theistic Vaiṣṇavas. There is no evidence to prove this conjecture. At most, it may possibly support his contention that Śrīdhara was more of a Vaiṣṇava at heart than his *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* commentary may reveal at first glance.

Inherently Contradictory Epistemic Claims

Further, as we more closely examine Jīva's claims about the superiority of the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, we see that he commits several seemingly contradictory claims about the nature of the *śruti* literature. On the one hand, Jīva is certainly an orthodox adherent of Vedic epistemology. Like the many upholders of the Vedic system who came before him, Jīva Gosvāmin makes the claim that the *Śāstra-pramāṇa* constitutes the most reliable of all *pramāṇas* (valid means of knowing). On the other hand, he directly

contradicts this very claim in his many attempts to downplay the authority of the *śruti* literature in defense of his *Bhāgavata-śabda-pramāṇa* thesis. Specifically, Jīva states:

> Since the *Vedas* are at present difficult to go through completely and hard to comprehend - for even the sages who sought to ascertain their meaning contradict one another - we will examine *śabda* in the form of *Itihāsa* and *Purāṇas* alone, both of which partake of the nature of *Vedas*, and serve to ascertain the meaning of the *Vedas*. Furthermore, those portions of the *Vedas* which are not known on their own can only be inferred by examining *Itihāsas* and *Purāṇas*.
>
> (*Anuccheda* 12)

In the above statement, as well as other places throughout his *Tattva-saṃdarbha*, Jīva makes three very specific claims:

1) That the *Vedas* are incomprehensible.

2) That there is a diversity of opinion about the *Vedas*, therefore negating the *Vedas*' validity and value.

3) That the only way to understand the true purport of the *Vedas* is through the Purāṇic literature, and spe-

cifically, the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*.

One of the claims that Jīva makes, namely the third, can be conveniently rendered in the following expanded analytic structure:

Purāṇic Superiority Proposition:

a) The real nature and purport of the *śruti* literature is now incomprehensible by the common person in this degraded age of *Kali*.

b) Conversely, the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* is a revealed scripture that is relatively easily grasped by the majority of *Kali-yuga* inhabitants.

c) Therefore, the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* is a scripture that is necessarily superior to the *Vedas*.

Unfortunately, the rather tortured conclusion of Jīva's argument does not necessarily follow from the two preceding premises for the following reasons.

First, it is not by any means a universally accepted truth that the *śruti* literature is currently incomprehensible, and

therefore meaningless. This is a true statement only in Jīva Gosvāmin's sectarian-colored opinion. Indeed, the Mīmāṃsā school, which is both historically and presently predicated upon the very project of Vedic interpretation, would vehemently disagree with this assertion, as would the vast majority of Vaidika philosophers, ancient, medieval, and contemporary. The Vedic literature is considered by Vaidikas of every *saṃpradāya* (with the arguable exception, of course, of the Gauḍīya *saṃpradāya*) to be foundational to any proper understanding of the totality of *Dharma* and the Vedic world-view itself. Murty explains the extremely high regard orthodox Vaidikas ("Hindus") have for the *Vedas* by enumerating several of the reliable epistemic qualities that they have:

> The *Veda* is a reliable authority because it teaches us about things which are highly useful (*phalavat*) and are not known otherwise (*anadhigata*); and this knowledge is uncontradicted (*abādhita*).
>
> (Murty, 30)

Indeed, important Vaidika philosophers have thought the Vedic literature to be of such importance as to have written extensive commentaries upon them throughout the history of this very *Kali-yuga* in which we are all living. Sāyaṇa's

fourteenth century *Ṛg-veda* commentary and Dayānanda Sarasvatī's[135] nineteenth century commentary attest to the comprehensibility ascribed to the *Vedas* by even rather recent Vaidika figures of prominence. Both Aurobindo Ghosh and Shriram Sharma Acharya were two, among many, scholars who wrote extensively on the spirituality of the *Vedas* in the 20th century. In addition, Vedācārya Sri Vamadeva Shastri (Dr. David Frawley) has based most of his almost three dozen works directly on the philosophy of the *Vedas*. Jīva's opinion on the supposed incomprehensibility and meaninglessness of the *Vedas* is thus not shared by other important Vaidika leaders, past or present. His is, in fact, very much a minority opinion.

Moreover, Jīva's attempted dismantling of the authority and primacy of *śruti* directly and severely undercuts his very own argument in yet another crucial way. Jīva claims that the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* is a "natural" commentary on the *Brahma-sūtras*. It is designed by its author, Vyāsa, to shed light upon the true meaning of one of the very same author's earlier works. What Jīva seems to forget, very surprisingly, is that the *Brahma-sūtras*, themselves, were

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[135] This is the Dayānanda Sarasvatī who founded the Arya Samaj in the 19th century, and not to be confused with the currently living *guru* who is the founder of the Arsha Vidya Gurukulam.

designed by their author – the very same Vyāsa - to be a perfect explication of the philosophy of the *Upaniṣads*, the very scriptural foundation of the philosophy of the Vaidika religion. The *Upaniṣads*, in their turn, are recognized by any and all Vaidika teachers, philosophers, and religious leaders who would wish to be seen as orthodox Vaidikas as constituting an integral part of the *śruti* literature. Indeed, as the *jñāna-kaṇḍa*, or knowledge portion, of the *śruti* (of which the *Saṃhitas*, *Brāhmanas* and *Āraṇyakas* comprise the *karma-kaṇḍa*, or works section) the *Upaniṣads* are without doubt the most important part of the *śruti* literature, from the Vedāntic perspective. Indeed, it is for this very reason that the philosophy of the *Upaniṣads* is known as the culmination (*anta*) of the *śruti* (*Veda*).

If the *śruti* is, indeed, a scriptural literature that is incomprehensible, and therefore of no redeeming value to the people of *Kali-yuga*, then does this fact not in turn render the *Brahma-sūtras* a valueless work, since the *Brahma-sūtras* are attempting to explicate an inexplicable literature? In turn, if the *Brahma-sūtras* are valueless, does this not make the commentarial function of the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* - which is supposedly the author's auto-commentary on the *Brahma-sūtras* - a rather meaningless interpretive

exercise?

On the one hand, Jīva claims that the *śruti* is useless, therefore the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* is solely authoritative; but on the other hand, he says that the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* is authoritative because it is a commentary on a work explicating the philosophical essence of a useless literature, the *śruti*. The problem with Jīva's argument, of course, is that in his zeal to uphold the inherent dignity of the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* as the most valuable part of *Śāstra-pramāṇa*, Jīva undercuts his own stated aims by attacking another valuable section of *Śāstra-pramāṇa*. He thus cuts off his nose to spite his face. Moreover, he is attacking a section of the *Śāstra-pramāṇa*, without which, the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* loses its very commentarial *raison d'être*. And if it loses its commentarial *raison d'être*, it loses one of the primary arguments attempting to prove its uniqueness as a scripture of supreme pramāṇic importance. To attempt to uphold the validity of *Śāstra-pramāṇa* by belittling *Śāstra-pramāṇa* is a project that is predictably doomed to failure as a necessary result of its own inherently contradictory nature.

A further claim that Jīva makes in his attempts to establish

the superiority of the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* over the *śruti* literature is based upon the very existence of several differences of interpretation of this literature among various Vaidika philosophers. Jīva's argument can be outlined in the following propositions:

Negation Via Multiple Interpretations Proposition:

a) The *śruti* literature claims to reveal the truth.

b) There is a wide diversity of opinion discernable among Vedic scholars about the actual meaning of the Vedic statements.

c) If there are two or more different opinions about *śruti* statement *X*, then necessarily none of the opinions about statement *X* can be correct by the mere power of these multiple interpretations alone.

d) If none of the interpretations of *śruti* statement *X* in question are true, then every and all such interpretations are necessarily false.

e) If none of the interpretations of the *śruti* litera-

> ture are subsequently correct, then the *śruti* literature's claim to reveal the truth is necessarily false.

There are several glaring problems with the above argument. The most significant of these is the fact that (c) simply is not a true statement. There is no logical axiom to be found in either the history of Euro-American logical and propositional analysis or in the Vedic Nyāya (school of logic) system that states that merely because there is a diversity of opinion about a given subject, it therefore necessarily follows from the mere existence of such diversity that a) none of the opinions are correct and b) the truth is not to be found extrinsic to the opinions given.

Let us suppose there are five people in a room attempting to determine the answer to the mathematical problem "4 + 4 = *x*". One individual claims that the correct answer is necessarily 5, another says it must be 29, another insists on .003, yet a fourth person says "California", and the last says that it is without doubt 8. Does the shear fact that the five people have a difference of opinion in any way negate the fact that one of them is correct? Of course it does not. If there is a correct answer to any given question, the mere existence of wrong answers to that given question does not

affect the validity and truth of the correct answer in any meaningful manner.

Moreover, let us suppose once again that the same five people are present in the same room. Instead of giving the correct answer to the question "what is 4 + 4", however, this time even the fifth individual gives us the wrong answer. Does a lack of knowledge on the part of all five individuals mean that the correct answer does not exist outside of this grouping of people? This, of course, would be the wrong conclusion to draw. Especially when dealing with knowledge as rigorously exacting and non-alterable as mathematical equations, we know that the existence of correct answers to basic addition questions is not dependent upon their acceptance by either any one individual, or even by any group of individuals, but are necessarily true as axiomatic and trans-situational facts. $4+4 = 8$ independently of who agrees or disagrees with this statement.

What makes these mathematical analogies especially poignant, as well as analytically damning, is that Jīva Gosvāmin, along with the bulk of traditional Vedic philosophers, makes precisely such mathematically rigorous axiomatic claims about the truths revealed in the Vedic literature. If the *Vedas* are the infallible repository of perfect

śābdic truths, which all Vaidikas do claim that they are, then the shear fact that there tends to be a diversity of opinion on the true purport of Vedic pronouncements does not render the value of those Vedic pronouncements either untrue, or necessarily inaccessible, or meaningless, or inferior to supposedly greater truths. At worst, it renders such pronouncements merely truths yet to be philosophically uncovered by one or more individuals.

Jīva's sincere motivations in his project of Vedic deconstruction were obviously sectarian at heart. His attempts to downplay the importance of the *śruti* literature were, however, certainly not designed with the purpose of establishing a new anti-Vedic *nāstika* (heterodox) school. Rather, his purpose was to offer the Kṛṣṇa-centered *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* as the scripture par excellence for the fallen, spiritually lethargic denizens of *Kali-yuga*. This was the theological project imparted to both Jīva, as well as the other five Gosvāmins, by their beloved *ācārya*, Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Chatterjee directly supports this contention.

> By exalting the scriptural status of the Bhagavata, an attempt has been made at replacing the supremacy of the Vedas and in this we may see a definite purpose. The earlier popularity of the Vedas was on the wane, the

> ancient Vedic rituals were being bereft of their earlier significance and were turning into empty ritualism. These did not remain unnoticed by Jīva. Perhaps it was the inaccessible and incomprehensible nature of the Vedas and their emphasis on an elaborate ritualism which prompted him to find a convenient alternative in the Bhagavata Purana.
>
> (Chatterjee, 23)

It is my contention, however, that in his attempt to uphold the supremacy of the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* over and against the authority of the *śruti* literature, Jīva only manages to undercut his own, otherwise very orthodox, support for the sanctity of the totality of *Śāstra-pramāṇa*. Moreover, he makes the unfortunate mistake of attempting to do this with arguments that simply do not work. Again, Chatterjee:

> ...although Jīva Gosvāmin tries to identify the *Purāṇas* with the *Vedas* on the basis of the argument that the former supplements the latter, yet the question remains whether the *Vedas*, which are already self-evident in nature, need any such supplement and also whether the supplement can be at all identified with what it supplements. In this regard, his citing '*itihāsa purāṇabhyām vedam samupavrimhayedi*,' etc. are undoubtedly serving his own purpose, but it hardly substantiates

> his own standpoint that the *Vedas* can be substantiated by the *Itihāsa* and the *Purāṇa*.
>
> (Ibid, 27)

Thus, Jīva's attempts to artificially place the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa's* importance above that of the Vedic (*śruti*) literature, while understandable from a sectarian perspective, ends up denigrating the very literature he seeks to glorify.

Antecedaneous Dependencies Leading to Philosophical Redundancies

One of the most conspicuous aspects of both Indian philosophy generally, as well as Vaidika philosophy specifically, is the estimably high regard that is placed upon maintaining a strict sense of fidelity to the teachings of one's *saṃpradāya* (lineage), preceding *ācāryas* (spiritual preceptors) and *siddhānta* (demonstrated philosophical conclusion). Unlike the case with the post-Cartesian Euro-American philosophical tradition, in both India and Classical era Europe originality in philosophic thought is not something that has been looked upon as being either beneficial or even necessarily progressive. Indian philosophers, whether they are Vaidikas, Buddhists, Jaina, or even Sikhs, have not prided themselves on their individual abilities to

surpass those great thinkers and seers who flourished before them. Such unwarranted pride would be correctly seen more as an ugly eruption of egotism than deserved self-praise. Rather, these thinkers have traditionally predicated themselves on keeping fidelity to the established truths that preceded them by purportedly unfathomable periods of time.

More significant than the importance of the antiquity of the truths in question, however, is the fact that these truths are believed by most Vedic philosophers throughout time to have been revealed by greater authorities than they. The truths safeguarded by contemporary Vaidika philosophers are truths that were carried down for countless generations by one *guru* to another. Therefore, all Vaidika thinkers acknowledge their utter dependence upon their immediate and ancient predecessors for whatever ideas, insights, and propositions they currently utilize. It is for this reason that these truths are optimally understood in a manner that does not desecrate their inherent sanctity by interjecting the chaotic element of human speculative endeavor into the mix. At most, the only speculative thought that is considered legitimately constructive is in the form of attempts to understand and communicate a previous sage's original intent. Thus we have the traditions of *bhāṣya*, *vṛtti* and

other explicative endeavors. Jīva Gosvāmin himself falls very firmly and consciously within this accepted tradition of acknowledging one's dependence upon the greater philosophers who proceeded one's contemporaneity. As we will now see, few of Jīva Gosvāmin's ideas are purely original, but can be traced directly to previous Vedāntic thinkers.

Śaṃkara, Rāmānuja and Madhva: A Comparative Analysis

Within the Uttara-Mīmāṃsā school, the philosophy of Badarāyaṇa Vyāsa, known as Vedānta, posits the existence of three ontological Reals, or *tattvas*. These Reals are 1) Brahman, the Absolute; 2) Jīva, or the totality of sentient beings; and 3) Jagat, or empirical reality. While all Vedāntists are in agreement about the logical necessity of these three distinguishing categories, they are far from agreed as to the nature of the existential relationship of these three categories to one another. As previously noted (Chapter I), the three most significant Vedāntic thinkers who preceded Jīva Gosvāmin were, in historical sequence, Śaṃkara (ca. 788-820), Rāmānuja (1017-1137) and Madhva (1238-1317). All of these Vedāntic thinkers attempted to reconcile the seemingly contradictory accounts of the nature of the three Reals (*tattvas*) found in the Upaniṣadic

texts in their own uniquely creative ways.

Radical Non-dualism: For Śaṃkara, the contention of the sameness (*abheda*) and distinction (*bheda*) of the three *tattvas* is explained by positing the sole existence of the former and denying any validity to the latter. Śaṃkara posits the idea that the sole reality is Brahman (God); and all perceptual and conceptual things that appear to be separate from Brahman appears to be distinct due merely to the imposition of illusion (*māyā*) upon Brahman. The moment that the seemingly individual being (*jīva*) realizes his/her actual non-distinction from the Absolute, ignorance (*avidyā*), activity (*karma*) and rebirth (*saṃsāra*) cease to be meaningful, both conceptually and affectively.

Radical Dualism: Conversely, for Madhva's relational ontology, the very opposite of Śaṃkara's conclusion is upheld. Madhva would deny the existence of any similarity between the three *tattvas* at all, and opt for their complete distinction from one other. Madhva holds that there are five eternal distinctions to be seen among the interrelationships of the three *tattvas*. These distinctions are:

a. Between Brahman and Jīva [B *v* J]

b. Brahman and Jagat. [B *v* Ja]

c. Jagat and Jīva. [Ja *v* J]

d. Jīva and Jīva. [J *v* J]

e. Between one element or form of matter (Jagat) and another. [Ja *v* Ja]

Only Brahman is substantially non-plural. Thus Madhva's ontological thought is commonly known as Dvaita, [136] or dualism.

Integrative Synthesis: Rāmānuja takes the sophisticated approach of incorporating both the *bheda* (distinction) and the *abheda* (sameness) statements of the *Upaniṣads* and harmoniously integrating them to create a system known as Viśiṣṭādvaita. As the name clearly implies, this system posits the Absolute to be *advaita*, or non-dual in substance, while being simultaneously possessed of *viśiṣṭa*, or comprised of clearly identifiable distinctions and attributes. The relationship between the three Reals, for Rāmānuja, is one of ontological origination from and dependence upon Brahman (God) by the two dependent categories of Jīva (category of individual souls) and Jagat (matter). This inter-relationship of adjectival dependence is analogous to

[136] This term is derived from the Sanskrit root *dvi*, or "two".

the dependence of the external, functional body upon the soul within. In the same way in which the insentient body is wholly dependent upon the presence of soul for its life, motion and consciousness, existential reality in the form of Jīva and Jagat are dependent upon the presence of God. Thus, in Viśiṣṭādvatic parlance, the relationship between Jīva/Jagat and Brahman is termed one of *śarīra-śarīrin*, or the relationship between body and embodied.

Jīva Gosvāmin's approach, known as Acintya-bhedābhedavāda, is a slight throwback to earlier attempts to reconcile the problem of sameness/distinction by claiming that both can be simultaneously predicated of the Absolute vis-à-vis the non-Absolute. [137] For Jīva Gosvāmin, Jīva (category of individual souls) both is and is not synonymous with the Absolute. They are synonymous in the qualitative sense that both Brahman and Jīva are composed of the same ontological substance - consciousness. They are thoroughly distinct, however, in the purely quantitative sense: though comprised of one substance, Brahman is nonetheless a perfectly omnicompetent being, while the

[137] While somewhat similar to Niṃbārka's ontology of Dvaitādvaita, or dualism in non-dualism, and the Bhedābheda of Bhāskara, the histories and central suppositions of these three distinct schools are not to be confused.

individual Jīva is ever-dependent upon the grace of the Absolute, and is therefore not omnicompetent.

Despite some considerable variations between Jīva Gosvāmin and the previous Vedānta *ācāryas* on several important questions of relational ontology, there is actually little variation between Jīva and his predecessors on the fundamental number of *pramāṇas* that are valid, or on which *pramāṇas* are to be seen as preeminent.

Jīva Gosvāmin accepted the preeminence of the three *pramāṇas* of *pratyakṣa*, *anumāna* and *śabda*. However, with some variance in details, all three of these previous *ācāryas* named above also accepted - at the shear minimum - the validity of *pratyakṣa*, *anumāna* and *śabda pramāṇas*.[138] Thus Jīva is not strictly unique in his insistence that all other *pramāṇas* can be subsumed into these three basic ways of knowing. Additionally, all three foundational *ācāryas* staunchly insisted upon the preeminence of *śabda* in determining the nature of the Absolute. Like Jīva, his predecessors also accepted the ultimate authority of *śabda pramāṇa* in all metaphysical and spiritual pursuits of knowledge. For Śaṃkara, Rāmānuja and Madhva alike,

[138] In addition to these three, Madhva also accepted *upamāna*, or analogy, as a fourth valid *pramāṇa*. (Chatterjee, 107)

śabda constituted the surest means of knowing God, with *pratyakṣa* and *anumāna* serving in the integral, yet subordinate, capacity of revealing objects-of-knowledge of a lower order.[139] Indeed, the *Brahma-sūtras* itself proffers *Śāstra-pramāṇa* as the highest *pramāṇa* in its very third verse:

śāstrayonitvāt

"Because scripture is the source of [knowledge of Brahman]."

In commenting upon this verse in his famous commentary on the *Brahma-sūtras*, Śaṃkara states the following:

> The scriptures, viz the *Ṛg-veda*, etc., just enumerated, are the valid means of knowing (*yoni*) the real nature of this Brahman. The idea implied is that Brahman is known as the source of birth, etc. of this universe from the scriptures alone that are a valid means of knowledge.[140]

In commenting on the same verse, Rāmānuja goes even

[139] In reference to Rāmānuja's Vedāntic teachings, for example, Srinivasachari states: "The central idea of Viśiṣṭādvaita as a philosophy of religion is the integration and harmonization of all knowledge obtained through sense-perception, inference and revelation." (21)

[140] Quoted from Swami Gambhirananda's translation (19).

further than Śaṃkara and states that *Śāstra-pramāṇa* is not only the sole means of comprehending the existence of God, but of also understanding the transcendental qualities inherent in God's very being.

> ...we hence conclude that Scripture is the only source of knowledge with regard to a supreme soul that is the Lord of all and constitutes the highest Brahman. What Scripture tells us of is a being which comprehends within itself infinite, altogether unsurpassable excellences such as omnipotence and so on, is antagonistic to all evil, and totally different in character from whatever is cognized by the other means of knowledge [*pratyakṣa* and *anumāna*]: that to such a being there should attach even the slightest imperfection due to its similarity in nature to the things known by the ordinary means of knowledge, is thus altogether excluded.[141]

Jīva Gosvāmin, then, is not at all unique in his opinion about the preeminence of *śabda* since the most important previous Vedānta philosophers (and arguably the vast majority of Vaidika philosophers in general) also held these positions.

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[141] Quoted from the translation by George Thibaut (173).

Is the *Ṣaḍ Saṃdarbha* Jīva's *Brahma-Sūtra-Bhāṣya*?

One interesting dimension of Jīva Gosvāmin's epistemological thought that has yet to be explored by scholars who have studied Jīva's theories is the question of his personal authorial motivations in writing down his ideas. After all, if all valid truth is to be found in the *Śāstra-pramāṇa*, then what is the necessity of even writing such seemingly redundant ancillary works as the *Tattva-saṃdarbha*? There are two answers to this question, one more or less obvious, the other provisional.

1) Even though it might be a *prima facie* fact that all truth resides in the *Śāstra-pramāṇa*, for those fallible beings who might not necessarily know of, or have direct access to *Śāstra-pramāṇa*, Jīva's work might, to his mind, serve as a pedagogical road marker pointing the way toward that highest of *pramāṇas*. Indeed, the history of Vaidika literature is replete with examples of ancillary works written by a wide variety of philosophers, the sole aim of which are to further explicate the true meaning of the Vedic literatures. As is the case with Jīva, all of these commentators and exegetes claim to only be elucidating what is already the perfect truth revealed in a perfect literature for the benefit

of an imperfect audience. Their position is that the works written by them are merely humble fingers pointing to the unchanging moon of Truth.

2) A further possibility that has not been entertained by any Jīva Gosvāmin scholars up till now is that Jīva might have meant for his *Ṣaḍ-saṃdarbha* to be, itself, a surreptitious commentary on the *Brahma-sūtras*. Again, it is Jīva's contention that the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* was, in fact, Vyāsa's own commentary upon his *Brahma-sūtra* treatise. If the sole purpose of the *Ṣaḍ-saṃdarbha* is to reveal the essential philosophical purport of the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, then would it not be inaccurate to say that Jīva Gosvāmin's work is an indirect, unstated *bhāṣya* (commentary) on the *Brahma-sūtras*, a "*Jīva-bhāṣya*", so to speak? There seems to be at least some circumstantial evidence supporting this as a potential possibility.

The major piece of evidence is based upon the precise style of philosophical writing that Jīva decided to employ in his *Ṣaḍ-saṃdarbha* and its marked similarity to the style used in the *Brahma-sūtras*. The *Brahma-sūtras*, which form the basis of Vedānta philosophy, employs a distinct fivefold system of argumentation to establish its philosophical claims.

This system is known as *adhikaraṇa*. The procedure of *adhikaraṇa* works in the following manner:

1. *Viṣaya-vākya*: A statement taken from *Śāstra-pramāṇa* is selected as a subject of investigation.

2. *Saṃśaya*: A doubt is then proffered about the actual meaning of the statement under analysis.

3. *Pūrva-pakṣa*: The ideological opponent's view is then stated.

4. *Uttara-pakṣa*: Then this *prima facie* view is re futed.

5. *Nirṇaya*: Finally a conclusive statement is estab lished. [142]

All of the major metaphysical and ontological conclusions that the *Brahma-sūtras* uphold are arrived at via this system. Intriguingly, Jīva Gosvāmin made the apparently conscious decision to use a style very similar to the *adhi-*

[142] In addition to the above names of these five elements of *adhikaraṇa*, they are sometimes also referred to as: *viṣaya*, *viśaya*, *saṃśaya*, *pūrva-pakṣa* and *siddhānta*, respectively.

karaṇa system in arguing for his conclusions in his *Tattva-saṃdarbha*.

Jīva's use of this clearly Vedāntic system of argumentation, coupled with the fact that his *Ṣaḍ-saṃdarbha* is designed to be a commentary upon the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, which is in turn itself supposed to be a commentary upon the *Brahma-sūtras*, seem to support the contention that Jīva Gosvāmin meant for his *Ṣaḍ-saṃdarbha* to itself be either a commentary, or at the very least a sub-commentary, on the *Brahma-sūtras*. Unfortunately, this evidence in itself does not offer conclusive proof of this possibility.

Indeed, a traditional Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava would possibly deny this theory as inherently faulty due to the fact that Caitanya - the founder/*ācārya* of the *saṃpradāya* (lineage) - had stated that no commentary on the *Brahma-sūtras* other than that of the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* was to ever be deemed necessary. The *Bhāgavata*, according to the Gauḍīya tradition, is not only the most conceivably perfect commentary on the *Brahma-sūtras*, but further, it is necessarily the only commentary that ever needs to be

written.[143]

The problem with this counter-view, on the other hand, is that Baladeva Vidyābhūṣana provided the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition with just such an extraneous *bhāṣya* in the eighteenth century in the form of his *Govinda-bhāṣya*, a work that to this day most Gauḍīyas consider their official commentarial statement on the true meaning of the *Brahma-sūtras*. The very tradition of which Jīva Gosvāmin is the foremost philosopher seems, then, to itself have suffered from a bout of literary inconsistency when it comes to this question of the need of a *bhāṣya* outside of the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*. Thus, while the evidence for this "*Jīva-bhāṣya*" theory is far from conclusive, it is by no means outside the realm of reasonable possibility.

The Flow of *Śabda* via *Ācārya-paraṃparā*

As we follow the progression of the divine descent of śābdic truth, we see that its place of origination is located in the heart of Nārāyaṇa, the Supreme Being. At some instant in

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143 Of course, one could justifiably contend that it was precisely the atmosphere created by Caitanya's denial of the necessity of producing another commentary in addition to the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* that possibly led to Jīva not openly declaring his work to be a commentary, though it may have indeed been.

the timeless reality of the transcendent realm of *Vaikuṇṭha* (the spiritual realm), this same Nārāyaṇa (God) makes the free volitional decision to utter this eternally existent (*apauruṣeya*) divine sound. From the mouth of God to the ear of the demi-god Brahmā,[144] the creator of the material realm (*jagat*), it is then transmitted. As utilized by Brahmā, this *śabda* is then used in the construction of the material cosmos in all its complexity, from the largest galaxy down to the very DNA used to direct the development of the infinitely diverse physical bodies we witness around us. This very same *śabda* is also used in the maintenance of the cosmos in the form of *dharma*, *yajña* (sacred ceremony), *mantra* and - most importantly - the way in which humanity learns of all the above: *Veda*. *Śabda* is compiled in the literary form of the *Veda* by Vyāsa, the *avatāra* (incarnation) of Nārāyaṇa, the very origin of *śabda* itself, thus

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[144] Brahmā is synonymous with the Demiurge (Gk. - *Demiourgos,* δημιουργός; Latin - *Demiurgus*) concept found in Classical European philosophy and among the Gnostic sects of early Christianity. God, being of purely spiritual ontological substance and nature, cannot come into direct contact with matter. Thus, He uses an embodied person in the form of Brahmā as an intermediary to create the material cosmos. The concept of the Demiurge/Brahmā is found in Plato's *Timeaus* (ca. 360 BCE), and the *Apochryphon of John* (ca. 200 CE), among other ancient texts. Marcion of Sinope (ca. 85-160 CE) , an important Gnostic philosopher, felt the Demiurge was synonymous with Yahweh, the god of the Old Testament. Yahweh was seen as a false god, an evil localized desert demon, and contrasted with the God of the New Testament, who was seen as the true God.

completing a revelatory circuit consisting of perfect Truth perfectly transmitted by the Perfect for the sake of the imperfect.

This same knowledge is then safeguarded and carried down to every successive generation of humanity by the unbroken lineage (*paraṃparā*) of *gurus*.[145] These *guru*/transmitters themselves serve several śābdic functions. First, as self-realized souls in their own right, they are concretely representing the *samādhi* tradition of the *ṛṣis*, the original revealers of *Śāstra-pramāṇa*. Second, coming in direct disciplic succession from the first *guru*, Vyāsa, they serve as his representatives to individual seekers of truth (*śiṣyas*) throughout history. The *guru*, consequently, is the ever-historically present replication of epistemic events originating from a sacred past. Because the *guru* is representing, via her own personal liberated *samādhi* experience, the same state of śābdic awareness that her ancient *ṛṣi* predecessors had, the *guru* is thus considered to be empowered to deliver that same unadulterated truth that these *ṛṣis* originally bestowed

[145]Among many other references to the *paraṃparā* concept is the famous verse from the *Bhagavad-gītā*:

> *evaṃ paraṃparā-prāptam imaṃ rājarṣayo viduḥ /*
> *sa kāleneha mahatā yogo naṣṭaḥ paraṃtapa //* (4.2).

upon humanity.

In this way, *śabda*- the imperishable divine word - is conceived by traditional Vaidika philosophers as flowing in a dynamic and continuous circuit, within which, reality as we presently experience it is but a transient and secondary by-product of a transcendent realm. *Śabda* exists eternally as non-different from the Absolute, is perceived periodically by the perfected *āptaṛṣis* (perfectely reliable seers), is communicated to imperfect humanity by means of *Śāstra-pramāṇa*, with the direct aim of inducing the very same śābdic experience within imperfect humans that was beheld by the perfected *āptas* (reliable authorities) previously.

Chapter VI

Jīva's Vaiṣṇava Epistemology in the Larger Vedāntic Context

The Metaphorical Versus the Philosophical

There are several implications for the interpretation of Vedānta philosophy that directly arise from Jīva Gosvāmin's epistemological outlook. Jīva's view is that *śāstra* is the literary embodiment of *śabda*, therefore, like other Vaiṣṇava philosophers before him, he naturally favors a verbatim interpretation of the *Vedas* and its ancillary literature. As a Vaiṣṇava, or a theist, this approach is in concert with the reverence he places in both *śabda* and its proposed source: Nārāyaṇa, or God. The kind of interpretive stance that Jīva consequently employs relies upon the primary meaning of the texts, unadulterated and free of all imperfect subjective interpretations and view-points. The secondary, or metaphorical, meaning[146] is to be resorted to only when the primary meaning is not clear or not suitable.

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[146] This is referred to in Sanskrit as: *jahad-ajahallakṣanā*, which suggests a secondary meaning that is derived by preserving one fact while abandoning the remainder of the meaning of a specific word.

In order to more fully understand this crucial differentiation between the primary and secondary meanings of a śābdic text, let us look at the following example. If we take the elementary proposition "It is a lion", we can immediately see that this rather simple sentence, composed of a nominative subject, a verb, an indefinite article and an accusative object, can be understood in two entirely different ways. The clearest and most unmistakable course of action to discern this statement's import is to search out the primary meaning, which states the following:

(Explication I)
"*X* exists, and is a large sentient being of the feline species, etc., etc."

The alternative manner in which this statement can be analyzed is via its secondary, or metaphorical, meaning. This route leaves the meaning open to a vast array of subjective and/or poetic interpretations.

While this path may be more challenging or even amusing to the textual analyst, divertissement is very rarely successfully equated with philosophical accuracy. The phrase in question now means any of several diverse options:

(Explication II)
"*X* is a male or female / god / hero / demon / animal / statue who has the strength / bravery / stamina / appetite / hairiness / scent of a lion".

In this particular understanding of the statement "It is a lion", the word "lion" no longer designates the integrated totality of the essential attributes of an actual lion. Rather, it now designates either one or possibly more of a myriad of lion-like features, attributed to any existent first-person individual of a vast range of real and potential species of beings. Hence, the statement is now merely implying that "*x* individual has *z* qualities of a lion". The problem with this development, of course, is that *x* and *z* can be almost anything the interpreter conjectures or wishes.

While this flexibility of interpretation might be a desirable trait in certain fields of endeavor (for example, poetry, epic prose, and artistic endeavors generally), such a method is certainly lacking the sharp linguistic precision and rigid clarity that is the mainstay of the philosophical venture. "The secondary meaning", as Chakravarti states the problem, "though based on the primary meaning, does not involve all the constituents of the latter." (16) Vaiṣṇava

philosophers insist on keeping the metaphorical and the philosophical as unmistakably distinct endeavors, until such time as their union is otherwise clearly warranted. Vaiṣṇava philosophers do not by any means reject the value of Secondary-Meaning interpretation. Rather, their interpretive formula uses metaphorical interpretation only as a last resort necessitated by any possible failure to derive a meaningful explication of the sentence or passage at hand by Primary-Meaning interpretation. If the meaning of a proposition is thoroughly unclear, does not follow from the previous *śloka*, or makes no sense according to the rules of Sanskrit grammar, then the verse in question is certainly open to increasing degrees of conjectural interpretation.

Understanding the effectiveness of Primary-Meaning interpretation, Vaiṣṇava philosophers use this contrast of methods in their critique of Śaṃkara's system of Vedānta interpretation, which is clearly a non-literal interpolation. Śaṃkara often uses the Secondary-Meaning method as his primary means of Vedāntic speculation. According to Vaiṣṇava philosophers, Śaṃkara uses this Secondary-Meaning interpretation even in circumstances when it is unwarranted. As one of many clear illustrations of these Vaiṣṇava philosophers' point, let us examine the famous *śloka* 18:65 of the *Bhagavad-gītā* using the textual analysis

methods of both the Advaitin and the Vaiṣṇava (theist) schools of philosophy.

This verse appears at the very last chapter of Kṛṣṇa's philosophical instructions to His friend and disciple Arjuna, and is often seen by Vaiṣṇava philosophers as the culmination of Kṛṣṇa's teachings.

Manmanā bhava mad-bhakto mad-yājī maṃ namaskuru /
Mām evaiṣyasi satyaṃ te pratijāne priyo'si me //

> Center thy mind on Me, be devoted to Me, sacrifice to Me, revere Me and thou shalt come to Me. I promise thee truly, for thou art dear to Me.

(18:65)

For the Advaitin, all names and forms (*nāmarūpa*) are nothing more than artificial impositions that we place upon the ultimate reality, Brahman, which is formless, being an eternal, omnipresent and unitary field of consciousness. This negation of subjective distinctness occurs not only with all obviously material identities (*prakṛti* and its by-products), but it also supposedly occurs with even those forms of God that are described in the *Śāstra-pramāṇa*, in-

cluding the *avatāras*.[147]

This being the case, as the Advaita school of Vedānta interprets this verse, when Kṛṣṇa is asking Arjuna to surrender to Him, Kṛṣṇa is not referring to Himself literally, but to what it is that He, as the *avatāra* of *nirguṇa* (formless) Brahman, is representing. What Kṛṣṇa embodies is none other than this amorphous Absolute of Śaṃkara's ontology. Given this non-dualistic metaphysical presupposition, the Advaitin philosopher has no alternative but to use the metaphorical method of interpretation in order to support this re-characterization of Kṛṣṇa's words. For, as such Vaiṣṇava philosophers as Rāmānuja and Jīva correctly posit, if the Advaitin employs the more natural Primary-Meaning method, he will be compelled to come to a radically different conclusion on the very strength of normative Sanskrit grammar.

A Vaiṣṇava philosopher, conversely, would begin analyzing the meaning of the above *śloka* (verse) by carefully examining the immediate grammar, syntax, and denotative

[147] Śaṃkara makes a scripturally unsupported distinction between "two Brahmans", a "lower" Brahman and a "higher". The lower, or *saguṇa* (with qualities), Brahman is the illusory form of Īśvara ("the Lord") that is worshipped by the "common person". The higher Brahman, or *nirguṇa-brahman*, is the qualityless Reality, which is both the source of Īśvara, as well as the soteriological goal of the Advaita Vedāntist.

meanings of the individual words involved. The most conspicuous feature of this *śloka* in question is the use of first person personal pronouns by the nominative verbal agent, who is Kṛṣṇa. He uses the pronoun *mat*, or “my”, three times, the accusative pronoun *mām*, or “me”, twice, and the alternate genitive pronoun *me*, “my”, once. There is nothing within the textual content of this verse to persuade any objective reader of the text that when Kṛṣṇa uses these various first person pronouns He is referring to anything other than Himself, the speaker, who is speaking only in the first person. Therefore, a Vaiṣṇava philosopher would say that the primary meaning would certainly suffice in understanding the words of Kṛṣṇa in this passage of *Śāstra-pramāṇa*. By way of illustration, if I were to use the word “I” in a standard North American English sentence, e.g., “I am human”, it would be illogical to say that I meant “you”, “it, “them” “the sun” or "nothing" when I clearly used the word “I”, unless there were very compelling evidence showing it to be the case that an alternative interpretation were somehow necessary. Indeed, if person **A** were to make the statement “I am Human” to person **B**, and then person **B** were to respond to person **A** “Oh, you’re saying that you’re a cow?”, we would clearly have a right to question person **B**’s grasp of language, person **B**'s ability to hear, or even

person **B**'s sanity.

Moreover, Vaiṣṇava philosophers holds that the act of resorting to the Secondary-Meaning method - especially when the primary meaning is not shown to be incompatible with the specific context of a śāstric work - amounts to a repudiation on the part of the interpreter of the theory of the self-validity of the *Śāstra-pramāṇa*. At the very bare epistemic minimum, all the schools of Vedānta accept the basic premise that the sound content (the *śabda*) of the *Śāstra-pramāṇa* represents the unadulterated manifestation of the Absolute in literary form, and as such is the final word on the subject of transcendence. This philosophical acceptance on the preeminence of *śabda* certainly includes the adherents of the *saṃpradāya* (lineage) of Śaṃkara.

If it is indeed the case that the *śāstra* (revealed scriptures) represents the perfect Word, or sound *cum* literary representation, of Brahman, Vaiṣṇava philosophers ask, then is it not the case that the indiscriminate use of the Secondary-Meaning method in the attempt to explicate these sacred texts amounts to placing the final authority of transcendent knowledge derivation on an extra-śāstric source? Moreover, if a certain extra-śāstric method (i.e., metaphorical

speculation) were capable of delivering knowledge about the true import of *śāstra* that the *śāstras* themselves were not capable of, then this technique of knowing would be epistemically superior to *Śāstra-pramāṇa*. Metaphorical analysis would take precedence over proper epistemic validity in the search for transcendent Truth. Would this not be a direct affront to the widely accepted theory of *śabda-pramāṇa*? Throughout the history of intra-Vaidika philosophical debate, Jīva and other Vaiṣṇava thinkers, would challenge many of Śaṃkara's fundamental Vedāntic interpretations based upon these and similar epistemological bases.

Chapter VII

The Inter-Philosophical Implications of *Śabda-pramāṇa* I

Vedic Versus Buddhist Epistemology

The legitimacy and efficacy of *śabda-pramāṇa* as a valid epistemological means of comprehending the nature of the Absolute is not dependent upon either one's sectarian religious faith, nor upon any form of cultural or ethnic presuppositions. *Śabda* is not a concept that can be relegated to the mere religious or sectarian realm. Rather, *śabda-pramāṇa* is a concept that is as rigidly philosophical in nature as are empiricism, the scientific method, or the laws of logic and reasoning, and thus it transcends all parochial considerations in its application. *Śabda-pramāṇa* is a philosophical concept and epistemic mechanism that not only transcends one's personal philosophical preferences and prejudices, but, as I will now argue in the following section, it is the most highly applicable *pramāṇa* for knowing the nature of metaphysical truth.

A Comparative Analysis of *Śabda* and *Āgama Pramāṇas* in the Vaidika and Buddhist Traditions

The dual Indian concepts of *śabda-pramāṇa* (the Divine Word revealed to reliable authorities as a means of valid cognition) and *āgama-pramāṇa* (tradition, or scripture, as a means of valid cognition), while including the two above epistemic functions, also have as their fields of inquiry a much broader range of objects of knowledge (*prameya*). As understood in the Vedic tradition, *śabda-pramāṇa* represents the only epistemic mechanism specifically designed to reveal transcendent truths (*brahma-vidyā),* which would remain otherwise non-accessible to human cognitive faculties. For Buddhism, only *āgama-pramāṇa* is capable of revealing objects of knowledge that are of a completely imperceptible (*atyantaparokṣa*) nature. While cursorily arising from the very dissimilar metaphysical stances of two differing South Asian religious traditions (the Vaidika and Buddhist traditions), it is my contention that *śabda* and *āgama pramāṇas* share both a common epistemic process, as well as object of knowledge. They are two interdependent functions of the same mechanism. *Āgama* (scriptural tradition) is the concretized literary form of *śabda*, while *śabda* is the experiential ontic condition necessary for the

arising of *āgama*. In the following section, I will explore several issues in order to show this to be the case. These issues include: a) the interdependence of the Vaidika and Buddhist schools of *pramāṇa*-theory (*pramāṇavāda*),[148] b) the precise nature of the *āpta*, or reliable authority, in both traditions, c) the concept of *pramāṇa-puruṣa* (a living *pramāṇa*) in the thought of the two important Buddhist philosophers Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, d) an attempt to reconcile *śabda* and *āgama pramāṇas*.

Pramāṇavāda

While the nature of the highest object of knowledge has always been a topic of discussion throughout the long history of Indian philosophy (whether that object be *ātman*/Brahman of the *Upaniṣads*, the *nibbana* {Sanskrit: *nirvāṇa*} of the early Pāli texts, or the *śunyatā* {"emptiness"} of the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature), the pursuit of indubitable knowledge via formulaic rules of logic and reasoning finds its first systematic expression in the *Nyāya-*

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[148] The term *pramāṇavāda* was first used in the modern academic realm by Surendranath Dasgupta to refer merely to Indian theories of knowledge (Dasgupta, 1969). John Dunne later uses the term in a more philosophically creative manner in order to designate the unstated tradition of Indian philosophers who formulated theories concerning *pramāṇas* (Dunne, 1999).

sūtras (ca. 550 BCE) of Akṣapāda Gautama. Sometime after this seminal treatise on logic was written, we also find the *Nyāya-bhāṣya* commentary of Pakṣilasvāmin[149]. As Bijlert confirms, the later birth of Buddhist logic can be directly attributed to the ideas formulated in these texts of the Vaidika Nyāya (logic) school.

> The Nyāya-sūtras by its systematic framework and the Nyāya-bhāṣya by its formulating some fundamental epistemological and logical principles for the first time, gave the impetus to the Buddhists (Vasubandhu, Dignāga and even to some extent Dharmakīrti) to develop their own form of 'Nyāya', their own systematic treatment of epistemology, logic and dialectics.
>
> (Bijlert, 2)

Similarly, later Vedic epistemologists would find themselves adopting several innovations in logic and *pramāṇa*-theory that were discovered by Buddhist philosophers. While the Nyāya school specifically accepts as valid the four *pramāṇas*[150] of *pratyakṣa* (sense impression),

[149] The time and place of birth of Pakṣilasvāmin are unknown. Frauwallner (1957) speculates that he must have lived before the time of Vasubandhu (ca. 400-480 CE).

[150] *pratyakṣānumānopamānaśabdāḥ pramāṇāni* (*Nyāya-sūtas*, 1.1.3).

anumāna (inference), *upamāna* (analogy) and *śabda* (Divine Word)[151], and the Vedānta school generally accepts all of the above with the exclusion of *upamāna*,[152] Buddhism has traditionally only recognized two *pramāṇas*. These are *pratyakṣa* and *anumāna*. This limitation is in keeping with the Buddhist denial of any metaphysical reality or entities.

Āpta-pramāṇa in the Vedic and Buddhist Traditions

Both the Vaidika *śabda* and the Buddhist *āgama pramāṇas* are predicated upon *āpta-vākya*, or the statements of reliable persons. In the case of the Vaidika tradition, the *āpta* is specifically an *āptaṛṣi*, an individual who has achieved a state of *samādhi* - uninterrupted absorption of her meditational focal awareness on the positive Absolute. Such a state has *yoga* as its direct cause and *tattva-vijñāna* (knowledge of truth) as its subsequent result. According to Vātsyāyana (ca. 475 CE, minimally, if not much earlier), also known as Pakṣilasvāmin, the authority of such an *āpta*

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[151] Interestingly, with the sequentially precise order in which these *pramāṇas* are given in the *Nyāya-sūtras*, there is an ever-increasing distance between the object of knowledge and the knower.

[152] The exception to this general rule being the Dvaita school of Madhva, which accepts all four *pramāṇas*.

(realiable authority) is based on the fact that such a perfected being:

a) is capable of directly perceiving *Dharma* (the in herent order of the universe) in an unimpeded manner;
b) has compassion toward all sentient beings;
c) and consequently, has a desire to share the truth with others - unchanged and reliably - for the benefit of all beings.[153]

Vātsyāyana also offers three other, very similar, criteria for identifying an *āpta*. His three formulations constituting āptahood are:

1) The possession of relevant knowledge.
2) The integrity of the person's motivation.
3) An ability to communicate truth adequately to others.

In this philosopher’s formulations, the inherently virtuous nature of the *āpta* is stressed.[154]

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[153] *sākṣātkṛtadharmatā bhūtadayā yathābhūtārthacikhyāpayiṣeti* (*Nyāya-bhāṣya* of Vātsyāyana, 223.5)

Indeed, the way in which the āptahood of an individual sage can be objectively determined is precisely by the radically heightened compassionate awareness and virtuous qualities of the person in question. The truths of scripture are grounded upon the personal trustworthiness of the *āpta* who revealed the scripture. In turn, the trustworthiness of the *āpta* is directly inferred by the virtuous excellences exhibited by the *āpta* in his or her daily behavior. An *āpta* is known by observing whether or not her personal subjective behavioral characteristics correspond to the behavioral norm expected of all *āptas*.

At this point in our examination of the nature of the *āpta,* the question naturally arises as to the apparent circularity of the above claim; i.e., that the means for determining whether *x* śāstric proposition is true is by observing the person who is making the religious claim in order to see whether this person is exhibiting behavior that is itself described in religious literature. In Tillemans' words: "Which is to be shown first, the authoritativeness of the person or that of his words? Or are these arguments circular?" (Tillemans, 1993) Alternately stated: Which factor is primary:

[154] *āptaḥ khalu sākṣātkṛtadharmā yathādṛṣṭasyārthasya cikhyāpayiṣayā prayukta upadeṣṭā* (*Nyāya-bhāṣya* of Vātsyāyana, 1.1.7).

a) virtuous attributes? or b) the epistemic reliability of *āgama*, which are the sanctified scriptural utterances of such ostensibly virtuous persons?

The solution to this seeming dilemma lies in the crucial distinction of two viscerally similar, yet motivationally distinct, strata of virtuous behavior. I call these distinctions 1) *sādhana*-virtue, and 2) intrinsic-virtue. In the former, virtuous behavior is purposefully used by the *yogī* as a means of *sādhana*, or practice, in order to eventually unfold the secondary stage of intrinsic-virtue. Upon emancipation from illusion, the latter stage (intrinsic-virtue) is achieved, and the *āpta* is effortlessly virtuous as a result of now living in accord with her true liberated nature, from whence spring all virtuous qualities. The former stage – *sādhana*-virtue - is volitionally ethical in nature. A person in this stage, for example, *choses to be* non-violent. It is a teleologically driven and pragmatic ethical program.

The latter (intrinsic-virtue), on the other hand, is revelatory of the sage's own intrinsic nature. The person, in keeping with the above example, *is inherently* now non-violent. It is a non-empirical ontological reality, which then serves as empirical (interestingly!) evidence for objective observers

of the *āpta*'s internal epistemic reliability. Thus, freely willed virtuous behavior in the form of *sādhana* (religious practice) causes eventual āptahood, and intrinsic-virtuousness as an ontic expression of the sage's spiritual attainment is then an indication of the sage's āptahood. To use an illustrative analogy, fire causes wood to burn - and the clear presence of fire reveals without doubt the igniferous power of fire where mere wood used to be. Later Buddhist epistemologists would generally agree with these limited criteria.

While similar to the Vaidika version of āptahood, however, the Buddhist conception of a person of authority does differ in some rather significant ways. Whereas for the Vedic tradition, *śabda* (Divine Word as an existent metaphysical reality) necessarily precedes *āgama* (the Word expressed in literary form), this cannot be the case for Buddhist epistemology. For Vaidikas, *āgama*, or *Śāstra-pramāṇa*, is merely the literary manifestation of *śabda*. *Śabda* is truth revealed in sonic quality, whereas *āgama* is that same truth rendered in written form. They are two functionally distinct aspects of the same phenomenon. *Śabda* is the ontological/epistemological side of the coin; while *āgama* is the

soteriological/epistemological side. *Śabda* is itself a metaphysical Real.

In turn, the concept of *śabda* is predicated on the concept of a transcendent and eternally unchanging reality. Thus, *śabda* is *apauruṣeya*, not created by any living being - including God - but is co-eternal with God. Therefore, it is an ultimate and unalterable Real. Thus, in the Vaidika version of the relationship between *śabda* (Word) and *āgama* (Text), we have the following causally dependent structure:

Śabda	Āgama
Source	Result
Metaphysically manifest	Literationally manifest
Experiential	Literary
Flowing vitalic truth	Concretized vitalic truth
Eternally manifest	Periodically manifest
Exists for its own sake	Exists for the sake of others
Heard	Read/Remembered

A river exists as ever-flowing movement, alive and vibrant. One can directly and objectively experience the taste, feel and sensation of a living river. A photographic snap-shot of

the same river can provide one with a sense of the river's nature, but not necessarily with the vivid sensation and immediacy of the direct experience. For the Vedic tradition, *śabda* is just such a living river of Truth. *Āgama* (scripture) is merely the snapshot of the same river, catching its eternal essence in one particular moment within the context of space/time.

For Buddhism, on the other hand, all potential metaphysical realities are, without exception, only illusory realities residing solely within the minds of suffering entities. Given the allied Buddhist metaphysical concepts of *pratītyasamutpāda* (the dependent origination of all instances of existents) and *kṣaṇikavāda* (the absolute momentariness of every instance of realness), coupled with the denial of any metaphysically transcendent reality, the idea of gaining access to an eternal *śabda* is an unmeaningful, and thus non-consequential, concept.

There is not an intrinsic grounding for *āgama*, or scripture, according to Buddhism, other than the sheer epistemic reliability of the person whose words constitute the scripture. Since, for Buddhism, anything resembling an eternal conscious grounding of reality - whether subjective (*ātman*) or

macrocosmic (Brahman) in nature - is purely illusory in an ultimate sense, all knowledge is necessarily knowledge of perceptual and conceptual realities only. All meaningful *pramāṇas* are thus necessarily cognitive in nature. Corresponding with the ultimately perceptual and conceptual grounding of knowledge, the only *pramāṇas* that are recognized are those two which directly correspond to the perceptual and conceptual: *pratyakṣa* and *anumāna*, respectively. Moreover, whereas for Vedic epistemologists there is a necessary distinction between the means of valid cognition (*pramāṇa*) and the fruit of this means (*pramāṇaphala*), for Buddhism, both are ultimately interpreted as *jñāna*, or cognitions.

In light of these important metaphysical - and subsequent epistemological - distinctions between the Vaidika and Buddhist perspectives on the ultimate grounding and source of knowledge, let us now summarize the similarities and differences between the two traditions' respective views on the nature of the *āpta*.

Vaidika Āpta	Buddhist Āpta
1) *Āpta* is capable of revealing supersensible information.	Agreed.
2) *Āpta* is perfectly reliable.	Agreed.
3) Āptahood is revealed via the individual's personal virtues.	Agreed.
4) *Āptavākya*[155] is the basis for *āgama*.	Disagree.
5) *Śabda* necessarily precedes *āptavākya*.	Disagree.
6) Śabda-pramāṇa is the necessary means of cognition for revealing supersensible knowledge.	Disagree.
7) Three *pramāṇas* (minimally).	Two *pramāṇas* (maximally).

[155] The utterances of an *āpta*.

Before we can attempt a philosophical analysis of the differences and similarities between these two epistemologies, it is crucial that we first explore in more depth the historical development and internal disputes of the Buddhist schools of epistemology.

Pre-Dignāgan Buddhist Epistemology

It is not until the writing of the *Nyāya-sūtras* and the *Vaiśeṣika-sūtras* that a systematized Indian account of *pramāṇa* proper is encountered in the history of general Indian philosophy. In Buddhism itself, we find practically no attempts at a systematic presentation of logic or epistemology in the earliest Pāli sources. In the *Tipitaka* (the "*Three Baskets*" that constitute the Pāli scriptures) there is some attempt at a classification of knowledge, as well as a reference pointing to the existence of a school of logicians known as the *Takkika*. (Prasad, 86). A clear reference to logical analysis as a distinct branch of learning, however, is made only in the later Sanskrit Buddhist literature. In the *Lalita-vistara*, there is a specific mention of this discipline under the term *hetu-vidyā*. It is arguably not until

Nāgārjuna (ca. 2nd - 3rd centuries CE), however, that Buddhist logic begins to truly develop.[156]

Nāgārjuna

Many of Nāgārjuna's metaphysical and epistemological conclusions are based upon the teachings of the earlier *Prajñāpāramitā* literature. These Mahāyāna works espoused the notion that, in keeping with the ultimate illusory nature of the entire realm of experience, anything approximating real knowledge is necessarily also an unreal possibility. Nāgārjuna later elaborately expands upon this theory, attempting to prove that all conceptual notions about the contents of the empiric realm were either of a contradictory or of a relative nature. Thus, they are all, on Nāgārjuna's account, devoid of any meaningful truth-content.

Nāgārjuna makes a distinction between two separate metaphysical realities, as well as two corresponding levels of knowledge. The first is *samvṛti*, or phenomenal illusory existence. The second is known as *paramārtha*, or real existence, which transcends the grasp of conceptuality. In

[156] Similarly, Jaina logic was not fully developed until the time of Umāsvāti, the 2nd century CE author of the *Tattva-sūtras*.

his *History of Indian Epistemology*, Jwala Prasad makes the following observations of Nāgārjuna's epistemological stance as it is found in his only extant text, the *Mādhyamika-kārikās*:

> ...the real doctrine of the Mādhyamika-kārikās is that of phenomenal existence (*samvṛti*) and real existence (*paramārtha*). The former is shown to be false or illusory by demonstrating that the notions pertaining to it are relative or contradictory; and the latter is characterized as devoid of all attributes and relations. The means of knowledge (*pramāṇas*) as belonging to the phenomenal world are also regarded as illusory.
>
> (Prasad, 103)

Thus, on the *paramārtha* (real) realm, *pratyakṣa* and *anumāna pramāṇas* - the only two *pramāṇas* recognized by Nāgārjuna - simply do not obtain. Jīva Gosvāmin and other Vaidika philosophers would agree with Nāgārjuna in this general assessment that *pratyakṣa* and *anumāna* are insufficient means of knowing Transcendence. As will be seen, later Buddhist philosophers were to take a more positive approach to the question of the nature of knowledge.

Vasubandhu

Several hundred years after Nāgārjuna, we encounter another important figure in the history of Buddhist philosophy. Vasubandhu (ca. 4th-5th century CE) was an important scholar of both the Sarvāstivāda and the Yogācāra schools.[157] Only several fragments of two works containing his epistemological thought have survived over the ages in both Sanskrit and Tibetan.[158] His *Vādavidhāna* is a work on dialectics and comments on logical proof (*sādhana*) and refutation (*dūṣaṇa*). The other text is the *Vādavidhi,* which establishes *pratyakṣa* (empiricism) and *anumāna* (reason) as the only two valid *pramāṇas* for ascertaining knowledge. Thus, Vasubandhu maintains the traditional Buddhist acceptance of there being only two *pramāṇas*. It is when we arrive at the writings of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti that we begin to encounter an intra-

[157] Though there is an on-going debate as to whether there might not have been two separate individuals known as "Vasubandhu", one a Sarvāstivādin, the other a Yogācārin, this contentious issue has no practical relevance to the purely philosophical topic at hand.

[158] These fragments have been collected by Erich Frauwallner in two articles ("Zu den Fragmenten buddhistischer Logiker im Nyāyavārttikam", Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes 40, 1933, p. 281-304; and "Vasubandhu's Vādavidhiḥ", Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Süd und Ostasiens, 1, 1957, p. 104-146).

Buddhist debate about the possibility and potential efficacy of a third means of grasping truth.

Dignāga

Dignāga (ca. 480-540 CE) was a Yogācārin who dealt very extensively with epistemological issues. Most of his extant works exist only in Chinese and Tibetan translations. His most important logical work is the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* (*Tshad ma kun las btus pa* in Tibetan), or "*Summary of the Means to True Knowledge*". On an initial reading of his writings, Dignāga seems to concur with previous Buddhist thinking on the number of valid *pramāṇas*. For Dignāga, there are ostensibly only two *pramāṇas* - perception (direct knowledge) and inference. While he recognizes instances of *upamāna* (knowledge via analogy) and even *śabda* (knowledge via verbal testimony), these are reduced to *pratyakṣa* and *anumāna*, respectively. As we will see, however, while Dignāga seems to be supporting this contention that there are only two valid *pramāṇas*, he also seems to uphold the notion of the possibility of *āpta-pramāṇa* as a means of knowing that appears to be independent of the former two *pramāṇas* in other sections of his *Pramāṇasamuccaya*.

Dignāga correctly holds that *pratyakṣa*, or direct perception, is only capable of revealing particulars (*svalakṣaṇa*). Universals (*sāmānyalakṣaṇa*), on the other hand, serve as the proper objects for *anumāna*. In 2.5 a-b of his *Pramāṇasamuccaya*, Dignāga claims that the cognition arising from not only *anumāna*, but also from *āptavākya* (the words of reliable sages), both give awareness of universals. Thus instances of valid knowledge derived from either of these two *pramāṇas* are of a qualitatively synonymous nature.[159] This linking of āptic supersensory knowledge with *anumāna* is similarly coupled with a linking of the former with *pratyakṣa*.

There are, according to Dignāga, four distinct modes of perception. These include:

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[159] *Yid ches pa'i tshig ñid bzuṅ nas kyaṅ mi bslu bar mtshuṅs pa'I phyir de yaṅ rjes su dpag pa ñid du brjod do / de skad du yaṅ / miṅ gi las rnams kyi don du mṅon sum soṅ ba'I phyir ro zes'byuṅ ṅo* (Tibetan). "And further, after we perceived [i.e., heard] only a statement of an expert, we call also this [kind of statement] inference [i.e., of inferential nature] on account of the similarity in trustworthiness [between inference and reliable statement]. And thus [by way of trustworthiness, a reliable statement] is produced because the activities of giving names [to things] is [inevitably] preceded by direct perception (Tibetan = *mṅon sum*, Sans. = *pratyakṣa*)." (Kitagawa, 1965, p. 455. 1-4)

1) Sensory awareness proper
2) The mental awareness of sensory impressions
3) The mental awareness of emotional states
4) The perceptions of *yogīs*.[160]

The first seems to correspond to the Vaidika notion of the *indriyas* (the senses), and the second and third with *manas* (mind). It is the last perceptual mode that is of most significance to this present exploration, since the Vaidika tradition very specifically equates the *samādhi*-induced perceptions of *yogīs* with the phenomenon of the *āptaṛṣi*.[161] Dignāga seems to be in agreement with the Vedic tradition when he holds that the primary qualifying factor that makes the *ātpa* (who is a perfected *yogī*) a reliable source of valid knowledge is the fact that the *yogī* has the ability to

[160] It is crucial in the study of Buddhism to always remember that early Buddhism largely viewed itself, not so much as a strict denomination in the common Western sense, but as a practical path of Yoga and meditation. The historical Buddha himself clearly identified himself as a *yogī* in the Śrāvaka tradition, practiced standard Vaidika Yoga disciplines for several years before achieving *nirvāṇa*, and many of his original teachings found in the Pali texts refer directly to Yoga, yogic states, and meditation. The Buddha was essentially a *yogī par excellence*, and early Buddhism consisted of the Buddha's teachings on Yoga philosophy. Thus, to such early Buddhists as Dignāga, the ideal sage is, not surprisingly, the perfected *yogī*.

[161] Indeed, in the Nyāya literature, such perceptual abilities on the part of *yogīs* is specifically referred to as *yogaja*.

view an object of knowledge without the need of a *via medium*. He says "[The] perception of the *yogins* is [their] seeing an object simply as it is, completely dissociated from any description [made of it] by the spiritual preceptor."[162] (*Pramāṇasamuccaya*, 1.6)

Further, in his enumeration of the various *pramāṇas* by which one can conclusively prove the non-existence of an object, Dignāga specifically mentions three different means. These are *pratyakṣa*, *anumāna* and *āpta-vākya*, or the reliable statement of an expert. Vittorio Van Bijlert confirms the rather crucial significance of this statement:

> Dignāga mentions the *pramāṇas* by which one could deny the existence of a subject. They are perception, inference and (remarka bly enough) reliable statement, the statement of an *āpta*, an expert, by which Dignāga is probably referring to the syllogism, although in the commentary he calls it *lun*, *āgama*, tra dition.
>
> (Bijlert, 73-74)

At the very least, then, there seem to be the seeds of some internal tension within Dignāga's own thought about the

[162] *mānasaṃ cārtharāgādisvasaṃvittir akalpikā/*
yogināṃ gurunirdeśāvyatibhinnārthamātradṛk//

natures of both the *āpta* and *āgama*, as well as the precise number of actual *pramāṇas* to be accepted as legitimate.

This indecisiveness is most evident in what has come to be called Dignāga's famous "Homage Verse" in his *Pramāṇasamuccaya*. The verse, which is designed to offer Dignāga's respects and obeisances to the Buddha, is as follows:

Pramāṇabhūtāya jadaddhitaiṣiṇe
praṇamya śāstre sugatāya tāyine/
Pramāṇa-siddhyai svamatāt samuccayaḥ
kariṣyate viprasṛtād ihaikataḥ//

> Having paid homage to him who has become authoritative (*pramāṇabhūta*), who seeks to benefit the world (*jagaddhitaiṣin*), who is a teacher (*śāstṛ*), who is well-gone [to enlightenment] (*sugata*), [and] is a protector (*tāyin*), I shall compose the [Pramāṇa] samuccaya, uniting here my opinions scattered [in various treatises] so that *pramāṇas* may be established.
>
> (Trans. Tillemans, 1993, p.3)

In this very important verse, it is rather apparent that Dignāga is indicating that the Buddha is himself an authoritative revealer of knowledge. Dignāga here refers to the

person known as the Buddha as being a *pramāṇabhūta*, or a "living *pramāṇa*." Whether it was Dignāga's intention to indicate that the Buddha was literally a *pramāṇa* (a means of valid cognition) or merely a metaphorical *pramāṇa* is not an important issue for the purpose of this present study. What is important is that the Buddha is, at the very least, recognized by Dignāga as being an *āpta*, a person who was a reliable source of knowledge, even if he uses alternative terminology to indicate this fact.

In addition to accepting the concept of the Buddha as an *āpta*, Dignāga adopts the same evidentiary criteria that previous Vaidika philosophers had formulated for proving the āptahood of an individual sage, i.e., the intrinsic-virtue qualities of the person in question. Dignāga uses four epithets to conclusively prove that the Buddha is a person of authority. To review, these are a) *jagaddhitaiṣin* (a world-benefactor), b) *śāstṛ* (the quality of one who knows *śāstra*), c) *sugata* (one who has gone to enlightenment), and d) *tāyin* (a protector). Moreover, these four qualities each succeed one another in a progressive causative sequence. Our clearest evidence that Dignāga felt that these qualities established the Buddha as a person of authority (*pramāṇapuruṣa*) are the words of Dignāga himself. In his

own explanation of the Homage Verse that appears later in his *Pramāṇasamuccaya* (1.1 commentary line 1-2), Dignāga explains the following:

atra bhagavato hetuphalasaṃpattyā pramāṇabhūtatvena stotrābhidhānaṃ śāstrādhau gus pa bskyed par bya ba'I don du'o

> As regards this [verse], there is at the beginning of this treatise a sentence praising the Lord [Buddha] as one who is a means of valid cognition [or religious authority] through [his] perfection in cause and effect, in order to produce reverence [for the Buddha] in the hearers of this book.
>
> (Translation: Tillemans, 1993)

Due to the Buddha's disposition of compassion toward all sentient beings, coupled with his status as a teacher, he has achieved liberation and becomes the protector of all. Thus, as is evident from the Buddha's own experience, inherent qualities and behavior, he is a person of authority (*pramāṇapuruṣa*, or *āptaṛṣi*).[163] Bijlert confirms that this is Dignāga's apparent conclusion:

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[163] Bijlert would concur: "The Buddha has perfected and saved himself, but also saves others by teaching them a road to ultimate salvation, a road which he has traveled himself. This constitutes, according to Dignāga, the Buddha's being a *pramāṇa*." (117)

> The perfection in cause (*hetu*) and effect (*phala*) makes the Buddha the religious au thority that he is, makes him a *pramāṇa*. In the rest of the commentary, it is taught that cause refers to the Buddha's striving for the welfare of the world (*jagaddhitaiṣin*) and his being the Teacher (*śāstṛ*), while effect refers to the Buddha's being the Well-gone (*sugata*) and Saviour (*tāyin*). Thus according to Dignāga, the last four qualities are meant to describe the nature of the Buddha's religious authority.
>
> (Bijlert, p. 115)

Despite what seems to be some evidence that Dignāga would support the notion that the Buddha, at least, would qualify as an *āpta* (or alternately, as a *pramāṇapuruṣa*) not all of his philosophical descendents would agree. Among the most important of these post-Dignāga Buddhist epistemologists was Dharmakīrti.

Dharmakīrti

Dharmakīrti lived approximately 530-600 CE and is known to have authored several important works on epistemology. Of these works, the one that deals most specifically with the points raised by Dignāga in his Homage Verse is the *Pramāṇavārttika*, and very specifically its second chapter, known as the *Pramāṇasiddhipariccheda*. The first seven

kārikās of this chapter deal with *pramāṇa* in the strict sense of the term. The remaining over two-hundred verses focus on the analogical sense of *pramāṇapuruṣa*. While the *Pramāṇasiddhipariccheda* section will thus naturally be the main focus of our discussion of Dharmakīrti, we will also necessarily delve into other chapters of his *Pramāṇavārttika*.

In the first chapter, Dharmakīrti provides a synopsis of the general characteristics of an *āptavākya*, or expert statement:

saṃbaddhānuguṇopāyaṃ puruṣārthābhidhāyakam/
parīkṣādhikṛtaṃ vākyam ato'nadhikṛtaṃ param//

> A sentence [an expert statement]: (a) whose [words] are coherent, (b) for [which] there are means that are suitable [for acquiring the desired ends], and (c) which expresses what is useful to man, is [alone] made the subject of an investigation [into the validity of such a sentence as a *pramāṇa*]. A [sentence] which is different from [such] a [sentence having these three characteristics] is not made the subject [of an investigation into its validity].

(*Pramāṇavārttika*, 1.214, trans. Bijlert)

Thus, for Dharmakīrti, an *āptavākya* must 1) not be incoherent; the meaning cannot be shielded in incomprehensibly mysterious language, as this would negate its epistemic usefulness. 2) It must provide the correct means to the end (*artha*), and 3) it must be useful information. It must yield information that will specifically assist its hearer toward the ultimate goal of liberation.

In the very next verse (1.215), Dharmakīrti provides two more important criteria for determining the trustworthiness of an *āpta*, i.e., that a) the contents of the *ātpavākya* (expert statement) must have been acquired by the *āpta* in question via his/her own power of *pratyakṣa* and *anumāna*; b) the contents must not be in contradiction to the hearer's own perception and inference. Dharmakīrti says:

pratyakṣenānumānena dvividhenāpy abādhanam/
dṛṣṭādṛṣṭārthayor asyāvisaṃvādas tadarthayoḥ//

> The trustworthiness of this [useful sentence] about visible and invisible things which are [i.e. can be] objects of the [two *pramāṇas*, perception and inference] consists in the fact that [the information in such a sentence] is neither contradicted by perception nor by two-fold inference."

(Trans. Bijlert)

The two-fold inference referred to is that of Karṇakagomin: *anumānena ca dvividhena vastubalapravṛttenāgamāśritena ca*, "...[inference] that has operated through the power of a [perceived real] thing and [inference] that is based on tradition [āgama]."[164] Given that these criteria are in place, Dharmakīrti seems to feel that the words of an *āpta* can be generally relied upon. Indeed, Dharmakīrti seems to initially agree with Dignāga that the Buddha can serve as a living *pramāṇa*[165], even if he later in his text attempts to refute the notion that the Buddha is literally a *pramāṇa* per se.

Dharmakīrti does not seek to negate the concept or efficacy of either *āpta* or *ātpavākya*. Rather, what Dharmakīrti seems to be attempting to create in his epistemology is a sense of *āpta-pramāṇa* and *āgama-pramāṇa* that is devoid of any metaphysical dependency. As we have seen, in keeping with seeming Buddhist orthodoxy, Dharmakīrti

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[164] *Karṇagomin's Commentary on the Pramāṇavārttikavṛtti of Dharmakīrti*, Rinsen Book Co., Kyoto, 1982, Rinsen Buddhist Text Series I, p. 392. 14-15.

[165] In 2.7 of *Pramāṇavārttika*, for example, he states the following: *tadvat pramāṇaṃ bhagavān*, "Like that, the Lord [Buddha] is a pramāṇa."

seeks to firmly ground the functioning of *āpta/āgama* in the perceptual and inferential. For example, while acknowledging that *atyantaparokṣa*, or supersensible, objects of knowledge can be ascertained via the statements of reliable persons, he simultaneously demands that the truth-content of the statements of such reliable persons be inferred as a result of the trustworthiness of such individuals' information about objects of knowledge that are not supersensible. If an authority is capable of delivering accurate knowledge about something that is apparent to the senses (*dṛṣṭārtha*), then he/she must also be reliable about objects not apparent to the senses (*adṛṣṭārtha*) as well.

In this insistence, he is in agreement with Akṣapāda Gautama's *Nyāya-sūtras*: *mantrāyurvedaprāmāṇyavac ca tatprāmāṇyam āptaprāmāṇyāt*, "And the fact that the [*Vedas*] are means of valid cognition [i.e., have authority] like the fact that incantations and medical science are a means of valid cognition [i.e., have effective authority, is derived] from the fact that experts are a means of valid cognition." (*Nyāya-sūtras*, 2.1.69) In other words, the sages who revealed the *Vedas*, which deals with supersensible objects, are the same individuals who revealed the Āyurveda system of medicine, as well as healing *mantras*, which deal with

sensible objects. Since we know they were correct in their revelation of these more empirically confirmable sciences, they must by extension also be correct in their empirically non-confirmable statements. This criterion that the earlier *Nyāya-sūtras* had formulated seems to have also been adopted by Dharmakīrti.

Concluding Observations

While it would be quite unfair to the inherent dignity of both systems of thought to claim that the Vedic and Buddhist epistemologies are synonymous, there are nonetheless an overwhelming number of similarities between them. These similarities include the idea that truth can be revealed via a person who has experienced the truth; that such a person can be known to be an *āpta*, or reliable authority, as a result of the person's intrinsic-virtuous qualities; and that there is a necessary process for becoming such an *āpta*. Jai Singh agrees with my assessment when he states: “Even the Jainas and Bauddha [Buddhists], who deny the authority of the *Vedas*, tacitly recognize *śabda pramāṇa* when they accept the teachings of Mahavīra and Buddha respectively as their guiding priciples.” (iii) The concepts of *āpta-pramāṇa* and *āgama-pramāṇa*, though

not sharing in the same ontological grounding, are found in both traditions. Moreover, historically there has been a clear inter-exchange of ideas between the two traditions. The few differences that exist between the Vaidika and the Buddhist accounts of supersensible epistemic reliability seem to be merely a reflection of the two systems' respective ontological presuppositions.

Chapter VIII

The Inter-Philosophical Implications of *Śabda-pramāṇa* II

The Implications of *Śabda-pramāṇa* for Euro-American Philosophy

"For often we think about things in India."

Aristotle, *Magna Moralia* 1899.21

Accepted Sources of Knowledge in Euro-American Epistemology

The concept of *śabda* as a valid means of acquiring truth is not a method that is at all alien to the history of Euro-American thought. Indeed, all three of the chief means of epistemic inquiry that are found in Indian philosophy have almost exact parallels in the West. Throughout European and American history, revelation, reason and empiricism have each experienced periods of both popularity and obscurity. In this chapter, I will briefly track the fluid careers of these three methods in the history of Euro-American philosophy, as well as some of the implications of *śabda-*

pramāṇa for the field of philosophy of religion, specifically as it relates to the perennial question of the existence of God.

The Three Epistemic Eras

Throughout the 2700-year history of the Euro-American philosophical tradition, we encounter very close parallels to the epistemic methods of *śabda*, *anumāna* and *pratyakṣa*, but under different names. *Śabda* is generally known in the West under the generic term "revelation", with *anumāna* usually known as "rationalism" and *pratyakṣa* as "empiricism". It can be clearly demonstrated that the history of Euro-American philosophy progressed through three distinct, yet over-lapping, successive stages, during which one or another of each of these three methods had prominence over the other two. These time periods in the history of Western philosophy I call: a) the Religious Era, b) the Rational Era, and c) the Scientific Era. During these three successive eras, *śabda*, *anumāna* and *pratyakṣa* served as the respective dominant epistemic paradigms. The Religious era was the era in which *śabda* was predominant. The Rational age saw the ascendancy of *anumāna*. And during the present Scientific era, it is *pratyakṣa* that serves

as the preferred epistemic tool.

The Religious Era: The idea of intuitive insight and direct revelation as a means of understanding the Absolute is certainly nothing new to the Euro-American world. It was, in fact, the means of preference during the Religious stage of Euro-American philosophy, roughly corresponding from the ancient Greco-Roman period, up till the end of the Medieval period and the beginning of the Renaissance. Given the enormity of this time frame, *śabda* has proven to be the most ancient, as well as the longest lasting, *pramāṇa* in the history of European philosophy.[166] During this era, the majority of philosophers were in agreement with the general proposition that true knowledge of metaphysical matters necessarily descended from above, from an ontological reality that was itself transcendent in nature, whether that reality was Heaven (for Christians) or the Divine Mind of God (for the Platonists).

[166] Despite its current exile to the peripheries of philosophical interest, the legitimacy of revelation is still upheld by a large number of contemporary Euro-American philosophers, including Alvin Plantinga, Keith Yandell, Leo Sweeney, and Richard Westley. Thus, the era of revelation is still very much alive, if somewhat surreptitiously studied, today.

Plato and the Realm of Transcendent Forms

On Plato's (ca. 427 - 347 BCE) account, for example, knowledge came as a direct result of an individual accessing the transcendent realm of Forms, the archetypal models of all physical and mental existents.[167] While his theory of Forms is not presented in any strictly systematic fashion in his writings, very clear traces of this concept are found heavily sprinkled throughout many of his 27 dialogues. It is an integral component of Plato's epistemological thought. Plato came to theorize about the existence of an ideal world of Forms by first observing the nature of the world in which he found himself situated.

According to both Plato, as well as many other ancient Greek philosophers, we live in a cosmos in which all of the objects of our sense perception are in a constant state of flux.[168] Everything that we perceive empirically is ever-

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[167] The Platonic Realm of Intelligible Forms seems to be synonymous with the realm of Brahmāloka found in both Vaidika and Buddhist literatures, specifically the four higher realms known as the *arūpa-brahmā-loka*, which are composed of the purely intelligible, unenformed matter (*buddhi*) that serves as the archetypal building blocks that Brahmā uses for the construction of enformed matter (*rūpa*) in the lower echelons of the material creation.

[168] On this one point, at least, Plato is very much in agreement with the

changing, impermanent, and thus imperfect. Though we may attempt to draw the most proportionally accurate triangle within our physical capability, for example, the greatest extent of our capabilities will never match the perfection of form found in our conception of the perfect triangle. Even if our triangle's imperfections are so minute as to be thoroughly imperceptible to our conscious sensory apparatus, they exist nonetheless. Plato had the early realization that it is possible to create perfect conceptions of objects despite their failure to find correspondingly perfect physical forms. Perfection, then, did exist. However, it only existed in intelligible form, in the transcendent realm of ideas, and not in the empirical world.

This realization led Plato to adopt the theory that there must exist another realm, one in which the material reality with which we are all so familiar must have its archetypal origin. This transcendent reality is changeless, eternal and wholly perfect. Conversely, the material plane of existence and its contents are secondary, inferior in quality and purpose, as well as an ontologically dependent imitation of the divine realm. Consequently, all knowledge that is empiri-

observations of Heraclitus (d. 486 C.E.). This doctrine of the fluid nature of reality is, of course, also a central feature of Buddhist metaphysics, which in turn is heavily indebted to Vaidika and Yoga metaphysics.

cally derived is necessarily faulty, being knowledge of no more than imperfect and pale reflections of the perfect paradigmatic forms of the transcendent realm. The only way to gain knowledge proper, according to Plato, as opposed to knowledge of mere opinion, was to access this transcendent realm via direct intuition. Access to divine knowledge was guaranteed, Plato taught, only if one were capable of living the lifestyle of a Philosopher,[169] or one who was a lover (*philo*) of wisdom (*sophia*).

As the new Judeo-Christian world-view began to take hold throughout the geographic remnants of the ancient Roman Empire in the early centuries of the common era, many of the Church Fathers were to continue the śābdic traditions of their immediate Pagan philosophical ancestors,[170] but with Christian revelation replacing direct intuitive insight, faith replacing enlightened trans-rationalism, and the Christian Heaven wresting ultimate authority from the Realm of Forms.

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[169] As described in the Platonic literature, the original notion of the "Philosopher" is very similar, if not synonymous, to the lifestyle and ideals of the traditional *yogī*, and specifically the *jñānī*, or seeker of transcendent wisdom.

[170] Indeed, such important Christian figures as Origen, Ambrose, Augustine and many others were directly influenced by both Platonism, as well as the Neo-Platonism of Plotinus (205-270 CE).

Augustine: Divine Illumination

With little doubt, one of the most intellectually significant of the early Church Fathers was Augustine of Hippo (354-430 C.E.). Inheriting many of the foundational ideas of Plato via the circuitous route of Neo-Platonism, Augustine incorporated many pre-Christian European Pagan philosophical concepts into the nascent theology of the new official religion of Rome. As a direct consequence, however, of his acceptance of the Christian dogma that God created each individual soul at the time of birth, Augustine was intellectually proscribed from accepting Plato's view that the soul was in temporary exile from its natural state in transcendence. Augustine's attempt to negotiate between the philosophical conclusions of his own Greco-Roman intellectual heritage, on the one hand, and the theological dictates of his adopted Roman Church, on the other, led to his development of the śābdic idea of Illuminationism.

For Augustine, human beings were in essence rational souls, dualistic beings composed of bodies that are pos-

sessed of souls.[171] Consequently, Augustine was incapable of locating the origins of knowledge in a transcendent realm. Rather, he locates revelatory knowledge in the God-given innate abilities of the human mind. Divine knowledge comes about in the human being as a result of a process of illumination in the human mind that is directly caused by the grace of God.

Though Augustine locates the seat of transcendent knowledge in the human mind, this idea is not to be confused with the notion of rationalism for two reasons. 1) Augustine holds that the potential for divine insight is placed in the human mind at the time of birth by God and is revealed in the human individual later on in life by the direct grace of God. Thus, as in traditional Vedic epistemology, the direct cause of divine knowledge in the human mind is the Absolute. 2) Unlike in Vedic philosophy, Augustine views the mind and the soul as being synonymous, as do the majority of later Euro-American religious philosophers. Thus when Augustine speaks of "mind", he actually means soul. This being the case, it could be argued that both Vedic philosophers, as well as Augustine,

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[171] This is an important difference from both the Vaidika and the Platonic teaching that we, in fact, *are* soul temporarily inhabiting a material form in a similar manner to a human being temporarily wearing a coat or a sweater.

would be in agreement in placing the locus of human enlightenment in the soul of the human epistemic agent. For both the Platonist, as well as Augustine, a) divine knowledge has its origin from the Absolute, b) is revealed as a direct result of spiritual proximity to that Absolute and c) is knowable to the soul solely through direct insight. All adherents of *śabda*-theory, both ancient and modern, both Vaidika and European, would agree with these three basic points.

Even with some speculative diversity in evidence among several later Medieval philosophers, the fundamental belief in the notion of revelatory knowledge being the most accurate means of knowing God served as the dominant form of epistemic endeavor during the Religious Era. With the dawn of the Renaissance, however, knowledge based upon revelation was to play an increasingly insignificant role in the thought of post-Medieval European thinkers.

Rational Era: The Rational Era can be viewed as corresponding roughly to the time period of the seventeenth to the early nineteenth centuries. During this period, there arose several philosophers who attempted to circumvent the notion of revelation being the highest arbiter of truth. While not necessarily rejecting the power of revelation out-

right, many of these rationalists felt that the immense capabilities of human reason alone were sufficient for arriving at truth - truth about subject matters both terrestrial, as well as metaphysical. Included among the adherents of rationalism were such personalities as Leibniz, Spinoza and DesCartes, all of who viewed the philosophical pursuit as a rigorous cognitive exercise very much akin to the laws of mathematics. For the Rationalists, truth was derived via the employment of rigid laws of thought as axiomatic and unforgiving as the rules of geometry. Arguably, the contemporary Anglo-American school of Propositional Analysis represents the modern vestiges of the Rational Era. The sovereign rule of *anumāna* (reason), however, was to be very rapidly supplanted with a new era of philosophy based upon sensory experience.

<u>Scientific Era</u>: While empiricism has always been recognized as a valid way of knowing true facts, both in the East and the West, it was not until relatively recently that this means of knowledge acquisition has come to be the dominant means of seeking knowledge. Beginning with such individuals as John Locke and David Hume in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, respectively, and continuing through the development of such schools of thought as Logical Positivism and Behaviorism, empiricism

has grown to become for many the sole accepted method for deriving knowledge in our present Scientific Era. Thus, the *pratyakṣa*-oriented musings of ancient India's Cārvākins have come to become the foremost theoretical paradigm of our modern age. The concepts of *śabda*, *anumāna* and *pratyakṣa* are by no means, however, the only parallels we see between the ideas of such Vaidika philosophers as Rāmānuja and Jīva Gosvāmin on the one hand, and those of Euro-American philosophers on the other.

Śabda-brahman and the Search for God's Existence

One of the most conspicuous preoccupations of the Western branch of philosophy of religion involves the ongoing debate over the existence, or lack thereof, of God. Plato first attempted to prove the reality of a divine existence using what was perhaps the first articulation in Euro-American history of a cosmological argument, an argument that seeks to prove the existence of a First Cause of the material world by proceeding from the very concrete fact of the material world's contingency.[172] From Plato's pre-Christian era up until the present moment, an untold number of philosophers have endlessly debated over the

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[172] For Plato's articulation of this cosmological argument, see especially his *Book of Laws*, book X.

question of whether or not God exists. Of the many notable personalities who have taken part in this discussion, we can include Augustine of Hippo, Anselm of Cantebury, Thomas Aquinas, Alvin Plantinga, John Hick, and Keith Yandell on the "pro" side, and David Hume, Bertrand Russel, and A.J. Ayer on the "contra" side of the spectrum.

Intriguingly, among Vedic philosophers, this question never quite reached the thought consuming fevered-pitch that it did among their Euro-American counterparts. The reason for this was that it was simply never considered to be all that crucial a question for Vedic philosophers. Rather, with the almost sole exception of the Cārvākins (atheist materialists), and possibly the Buddhists, the existence of a transcendent reality was as much a given assumption for most Indian philosophers as is the existence of empirical reality to all contemporary empirical philosophers. Moreover, it was precisely from the starting point of this shared assumption of the existence of a positive Absolute that Vedic philosophers generally proceeded to articulate their various metaphysical, ethical, aesthetic, political, and epistemological theories. Accordingly, instead of focusing great amounts of time and cerebral energy to the task of trying to prove the existence of an Absolute, Vedic philosophers, and most Indian philosophers generally, devoted the

bulk of their time in various attempts to directly experience this Absolute and to then communicate their objective experiential findings to others. As Mahanamabrata explains this approach:

> Hardly anywhere in the vast literature of Vedānta philosophy does one come across such a thing as proof of the existence of God. One finds instead descriptions of the experiences of God and various formulations of methods and disciplines, ways and means which had led one to such experiences...God is the object of religious experience. How can abstract logic, divorced as it is from the concrete experience of living, prove or disprove the reality of God?
>
> (37)

Only when involuntarily compelled by their various encounters with such non-theistic systems as Buddhism, Jainism - and much later, the modern scientific world-view - did Vedic philosophers feel it necessary to begin to seriously articulate several proofs for God's existence. In the course of Indian history, we thus witness the creation of arguments that closely mirror their Western counterparts. Vedic philosophers created theistic arguments that were - among others - cosmological, teleological and ontological in nature. Being a tradition deeply shaped by the episte-

mology of *śabda*, all seven schools of Vaidika philosophy have recognized the limitations of attempting to "prove" the existence of the transcendent Absolute by means of intellectual speculation.

These limitations are seen by no one more than Jīva Gosvāmin. While Jīva does not present us with any single argument supporting the existence of God per se, he does have much to say about the knowability of God, and of God's nature and attributes. Like all other Vaiṣṇava philosophers before him,[173] Jīva feels that the basic nature and attributes of the Absolute can not only be known, but are described in vivid detail in various portions of the *Śāstra-pramāṇa*, including the *Purāṇas*, *Itihāsas*, and *Upaniṣads*. While the nature and function of various qualities of God can be known, however, the full quantitative extent of those qualities can never be known, due to the finite nature of human intelligence. Thus, Jīva ultimately describes the quantitative content of God's essence, existence, and attributes, vis-à-vis all human attempts to grasp the full extent of those qualities, as being *acintya*, or beyond conceivability. Certain attributive facts about God can be grasped and understood cognitively, such as the facts of His

[173] Most notably Rāmānuja, with whom Jīva shares more philosophical agreements than perhaps any other pre-Jīvan philosopher.

omnipotence, omniscience, blissful nature, mercy, beauty, etc. Precisely how blissful, how merciful, how beautiful, etc. God is, however, can never be fully known to the *ātman*, or the dependent, individual, finite self. Thus, while Jīva in no way claims knowledge of the attributes of God to be ineffable, he does claim that the full extent of God's qualities are beyond the ken of human conception.

Jīva's Epistemology and Anselm's *Unum Argumentum*

Of the many comparative illustrations of the similarities between Vaidika and Euro-American philosophy that may be attempted, the parallels between Jīva Gosvāmin's concept of God as being ultimately *acintya*, or beyond full conceivability, and the Medieval Christian-Platonist theologian Anselm of Canterbury's (1033-1109) concept of God as "That than which nothing greater can be conceived" are quite intimate. Additionally, these parallels are full of potential as a prospective subject for future comparative philosophical analyses. The initial start of such a comparative analysis necessarily requires a brief introduction to Anselm's famed "ontological argument".

"Aliquid Quo Nihil Maius Cogitari Possit"

Anselm was, himself, a strict Augustinian.[174] As such, he subscribed to the notion that philosophical understanding was necessary mainly as an aid to religious faith, and not as a discipline that was possessed of inherent value. Anselm held that faith necessarily preceded any intellectual understanding of God's nature.[175] With this stance as a point of departure, he sought to give Christian believers an intellectual basis for their theological belief. It was this aim, and not the hope of necessarily converting opponents, which drove his search for an *unum argumentum*: a single proof demonstrating God's necessary existence. His Ontological Argument, as presented in the *Proslogion*, accomplishes this in the following manner.

Before we can even begin to conceive of God's existence,

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[174] And, thus, by natural extension, Anselm was heavily influenced by Neo-Platonist ideas.

[175] In this regard, Anselm stated his epistemological stance in the following manner in his work, the *Proslogion*, "I do not seek to understand so that I may believe, but I believe so that I may understand" (Pros., p. 154-155). Thus, rather than employing either a strictly *śābdic*, or a strictly revelation-based, method of inquiry, Anselm could be said to have used an epistemology of subjective belief, or an epistemology of faith.

Anselm argues, we must first have at least some slight glimpse into His essence. Thus Anselm postulates the following formulaic construct as an essential definition of the Supreme Being. God is *aliquid quo nihil maius cogitari possit*, “That than which nothing greater can be conceived”. As soon as this definition is heard by any rational human person, Anselm’s argument continues, its meaning is understood cognitively. It then automatically exists in the mind of the hearer. Even if this statement is not accepted as being true, it is at least understood grammatically, and thus conceptually; and this fact is alone sufficient for the present argument.

Now Anselm asserts that there are two distinct modes of existence: 1) existence in the mind solely (m), and 2) existence in the mind, coupled with existence in external reality ($m+r$). The example he gives is of a painter. First this painter has a mental image of the work he is about to produce (m). When the work is finally completed, it then exists in concrete reality ($m+r$), in addition to being solely in the painter’s mind (m). What exists in reality, as well as in the mind ($m+r$), is superior to that which exists in the mind alone (m). This is so because it then has a more independent and meaningful existence. Its existence thus

contains within it a greater number of potential possibilities. Anselm posits this truth to show that "That than which nothing greater can conceived" must exist both in the mind, as well as in reality ($m+r$).

It having been established that "That than which nothing greater can be conceived" can be grasped conceptually in the mind, if this being existed solely in the mind (m), then something greater than it would exist, namely, that which exists both conceptually, as well as in reality ($m+r$). Therefore, for the above formula to truly instantiate what it states, it must exist in the mind as well as in reality ($m+r$). Otherwise, something greater than it can be conceived. This argument ingeniously presents the human reasoning faculty with a concept of God such that it always manages to exceed itself, and necessarily so. The ontological argument for God's existence is, then, a self-contained, single proof that simply requires the medium of a rational mind in order for the proof to be functionally operative.

A Comparative Veridical Analysis

While, again, Jīva did not himself formulate an argument for God's existence per se, he would nonetheless have

agreed with many of Anselm's metaphysical and epistemological assumptions. For example, like Anselm, most Vaidika philosophers - Jīva included - would maintain that it is necessary to first know the nature of God's essence before it is possible to know of his existence. For Indian philosophy generally, ontology always precedes epistemology, essence always precedes existence.[176]

Moreover, Jīva and Anselm would be in general agreement in wishing to posit inconceivability as one of the positive defining attributes of the Godhead. For both ancient European and traditional South Asian philosophy, as well as for both Christian and Hindu theology, God is a being whose full dimensional scope is ultimately beyond the grasp of the human intellect. Whether the proposition is stated in Sanskrit or in Latin, both traditions agree that the Absolute is beyond the range of full quantitative conceivability.

[176] Chakravarti supports this contention: "In India, philosophers have generally based their epistemological conclusions on their metaphysical views, for they have been able to realise that the truth of an epistemological theory finally depends on the truth of some metaphysical theory already assumed..." (p.3). Further, I would argue that this is the case for all epistemological systems, regardless of their particular stand on the existence of a transcendent reality. Even radical empiricists, for example, base their epistemological notions on the presupposition that matter is the highest (if only because it is the sole) ontological substance in reality. Such a claim is clearly a metaphysical one. The only difference, then, between traditional Vaidika philosophers and others is that Vaidika philosophers readily admit their metaphysical presuppositions from the get-go.

Śābdic Epistemology Versus Subjective Faith Epistemology

It is when we examine the epistemological positions of Jīva and Anselm a little more closely that we see some divergence of opinion. For again, while we can implicitly assume that Anselm derives his ultimate epistemic authority from the realm of "*śabda*", i.e., from the Biblical revelation, Anselm states rather explicitly that his epistemic authority is actually derived more from a sense of subjective religious faith. Rather than being strictly *śabda-pramāṇa*, then, or even a strictly revelation-based epistemological stance in the traditionally understood Christian sense, Anselm's epistemology could be termed a *śraddhā-pramāṇa*, or "faith-based"-*pramāṇa*.

The problem that is produced as a result of placing epistemic authority on such a subjective, and therefore unstable, ground is that faith *(śraddhā)*, at least according to Vedic philosophers, is a force that arises from the will, mind and emotions. It is not something that arises from the plane of pure consciousness. It is, therefore, not considered to be quite as epistemically reliable as the experience of trans-subjective śābdic insight, since the

śabda phenomenon is one in which unadulterated personal consciousness is in direct, non-mediated contact with the Absolute. "...what is ordinarily considered to be the realm of faith", according to Mahanamabrata, "is very boldly declared to be the realm of experience by Vedānta philosophers." (38) Moreover, while both the focus and the locus of śābdic experience is the subjective cognitive being, the all-important content of the experience is anything but subjective. The knowledge that is derived by the subjective being, from the Absolute, is thoroughly perfect - and therefore purely and axiomatically objective - Truth.

Whereas Anselm derives his knowledge of the Absolute from the realm of faith, which is always subjective and subject to change, Vaiṣṇava (theistic) epistemology places knowledge of that Absolute (*brahma-vidyā*) squarely on *Śāstra-pramāṇa*. And seeking such knowledge via *Śāstra-pramāṇa* is only inaccurately to be confused with a mere matter of subjective faith. Rather, Vedic philosophers would argue, knowledge derived via *Śāstra-pramāṇa* is an instance of enlightened rationalism. While Anselm's *śraddhā-pramāṇa* (faith-based) epistemological position does not seem to directly alter the formulaic effect of his ontological argument per se, it is still a major cause of con-

cern that the author of this famous argument would base his philosophical presuppositions on so seemingly ephemeral and subjective an epistemological foundation as personal religious belief.

One of the ontological underpinnings of this argument is the assumption that the nature of God must include the attribute of an infinite degree of omnicompetance. If there is a God, it is then assumed by Anselm, that God must be a being such that He will inherently possess all positive qualities to an infinitely superlative degree. Using Anselm's formula, God cannot be bad, for there is a state that is conceivably greater: goodness. God cannot be unwise, for wisdom surpasses unwisdom. But what tells us that the specific being whom Anselm calls the "God worshipped by all people", i.e., the specifically Christian conceptual construct of an Absolute, must be this very same God who necessarily has positive qualities to an infinite degree? There is no evidential linkage, barring the "evidence" of "faith". Faith alone, however, as the tool by which a philosopher claims to know such attributes of God, devoid of a sound epistemic base, simply is not sufficient to prove this contention philosophically.

One possible solution to this weakness of ontological verifi-

cation might be to base the epistemological underpinnings of Anselm's ontological argument on the more sturdy and proven foundation of śābdic knowledge as formulated in the Vedic world-view. As all Vaiṣṇava philosophers (as well as the majority of Vaidika philosophers in general) would argue, detailed, accurate and authoritative accounts of the nature and attributes of God, as well as confirmation that these attributes are all of an ethically positive nature, are found in abundance in the *Śāstra-pramāṇa* literature. According to Vaiṣṇava philosophers, these descriptions are found throughout the literary manifestations of *śabda*, ranging from the ancient *Ṛg-veda* to the later *Purāṇas*. On Jīva's more sectarian-colored account, of course, the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* would be the most accurately descriptive of these Divine qualities, since it is the *saviśeṣa* - or personalistic - *śāstra* (revealed text) par excellence.

In any case, the totality of *śāstra* offers insights into the nature of the Absolute which are unparalleled by anything comparable in the history of Euro-American religion or philosophy. With such a synthetic approach to the question of God's existence, the Ontological Argument would then couple its own inherent demonstrative power with an epistemology the abundant veridicality of which has been tried

and proven, and which is, consequently, both valid as well as true.

Chapter IX

Some Concluding Thoughts

As I have demonstrated, the general epistemological underpinnings of Jīva Gosvāmin's approach to *pramāṇa* theory, and his subsequent Vedāntic interpretation, are clearly traced to his Vaiṣṇava philosophic predecessors – most specifically Rāmānuja - and are firmly grounded in orthodox Vaidika doctrine. The concept of *śabda* as the most authoritative and accurate of the various *pramāṇas* of both general Indian, and specifically Vaidika philosophy, is not a concept that is in any way unique to Jīva Gosvāmin. Both the Vaiṣṇava schools of Rāmānuja and Madhva, as well as the Advaita school of Śaṃkara, accepted the superiority of *Śāstra-pramāṇa* over and above *pratyakṣa* and *anumāna* when attempting to acquire insight into the nature of the Absolute. Previous to Śaṃkara, the preeminence of *śabda* was accepted by the Vaiśeṣika and Pūrva-mīmāṃsā schools, as well as by Bodhāyana, and the other pre-Śaṃkaran Vedāntists. Arguably, all Vedic philosophers – by very definition – are upholders of the theory of *śabda-pramāṇa*, since all Vedic philosophers are upholders of the philosophical and epistemological efficacy of the

sacred Vedic literature. While resting epistemological claims upon the *pramāṇa* of *śabda* is nothing new in the annals of the long history of South Asian philosophy, however, claiming a specific śāstric work - specifically the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* - to be the perfect manifestation of *śabda* is, indeed, a unique attempt on the part of Jīva Gosvāmin.

Moreover, the implications of accepting the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* as the highest śābdic authority are severalfold. Being an overtly theistic and devotional work, the *Bhāgavata* presents the Absolute in radically *saviśeṣa*, or personalistic, terms. Therefore, what Jīva Gosvāmin implies in not so subtle tones is that the very specifically, *Bhāgavata*-inspired, Vaiṣṇava interpretation of the Absolute as a transcendent personality, full of infinite, divine attributes, represents nothing less than the highest conception of transcendence taught in the entirety of the *Śāstra-pramāṇa* literature. More, however, it was Jīva Goswāmin's personal task to demonstrate that the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* very specifically upheld the Kṛṣṇa-centric theology of Jīva's *guru* and predecessor, Caitanya Mahāprabhu, as well as his philosophical concept of *acintya-bhedābhedavāda*, "inconceivable, simultaneous difference and unity".

Ultimately, however, while Jīva Gosvāmin does a satisfactory service in restating the traditionally held orthodox Vedic defense of *śabda-pramāṇa*, he does not fully succeed in his attempt to prove the primacy of the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* within the greater śābdic corpus. This is true for several reasons.

1) Some quotations used by Jīva Gosvāmin are clearly taken out of context and very selectively quoted in order to prove something which they were never designed by their authors to prove. Since the *Śāstra-pramāṇa*, being in their totality the literary incarnation of God's thoughts, must be accepted in their totality for any one part of them to be at all accurate, Jīva again undercuts the very epistemological base he is claiming to uphold in his attempt to "prove" his sectarian theological contentions.

2) Jīva's contention that the supposed current incomprehensibility of the *Śruti* literature makes the Purāṇic literature of greater epistemic value is very simply indemonstrable.

3) Historically, no other antecedent philosophical, preceptorial or sectarian figure whom even Jīva would consider

authoritative has ever held the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* to be the apex of the śāstric literature, much less the only commentary on Badarāyaṇa Vyāsa's *Brahma-sūtras* acceptable for a proper understanding of Vedānta. The fact that even the Gauḍīya-recognized Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas*, Bodhāyana, Rāmānuja, Niṃbārka, Madhva, Vallabha and Baladeva themselves saw fit to write commentaries on the *Brahma-sūtras* proves that they would not (and in Baladeva's case *could not*) support this contention.

That having been stated, whether Jīva Gosvāmin is successful in clearly demonstrating his metaphysical and theological assumptions is not the primary task of this book. What is one of this work's tasks, however, is to examine whether or not Jīva Gosvāmin created compelling and original arguments in his attempts to both uphold his predecessor's acceptance of the primacy of *śabda*, as well as in support of his own original attempt to demonstrate the overall importance of the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* vis-à-vis the other literary components of *Śāstra-pramāṇa*. My conclusion is that he is successful in upholding the former, but very clearly is not successful in his latter attempt.

Additionally, I have demonstrated that the acceptance of

the primacy of *śabda* has several potential direct implications upon the philosophic enterprise of both the South Asian, as well as the Euro-American, philosophical traditions. The influence upon the former is seen primarily - though not exclusively - in the realm of literary and scriptural interpretation. The potential influence upon the latter is displayed in the seemingly ever-elusive search for a cognitively based argument demonstrating the factual existence of a transcendent Absolute, especially in relation to Anselm's ontological argument.

Jīva Gosvāmin has proven in several respects to be one of the more original philosophic figures to be found in the very long and eminently distinguished history of both South Asian philosophy generally, as well as Vedic philosophy specifically. The present work is, admittedly, only a very cursory and introductory investigation into the overall philosophical thought of Jīva Gosvāmin and of Vedic epistemology. The astoundingly precise and effective mechanisms by which God is known in the Vedic tradition certainly represents the clearest, most direct, and most rational path to experiencing the Divine that exists in our world today. As a living and dynamic spiritual tradition, the path of the *ṛṣis* and the Vedic way of knowing God is especially valuable to those spiritual practitioners, modern-

day *yogīs/yogīnis* and followers of Dharma who aspire to have a direct experience of the presence of God in their lives. It is my sincere hope that the work that has begun with this present book will represent only the beginning of further exploration into the many contributions of the Vedic approach to epistemology on the part of other scholars in the immediate future.

yasya deve parā bhaktir yathā deve tathā gurau
tasyaite kathitā hyarthaḥ prakaśante mahātmanaḥ
prakaśante mahātman iti

"Unto those great souls who have implicit devotion toward both the Lord and the spiritual master, all the truths of Vedic knowledge are automatically revealed."

(*Śvetaśvatara Upaniṣad*, 6.23)

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Glossary of Philosophical Terms

abādhita: Uncontradicted.

abhāva: Non-existence; absence.

abheda: Sameness

ācārya: Teacher; preceptor; philosopher.

ācārya-āsana: The seat of the Ācārya, both literally and institutionally.

ācārya-paraṃparā: The disciplic succession of ācāryas of any given Vaidika school.

Acintya-bhedābheda: "Inconceivable simultaneous dif ference and identity." The Vedānta philosophy of Jīva Gosvāmin.

ādhāra: Foundation.

ad infinitum (Latin): "To infinity".

adṛṣṭārtha: Objects not apparent to the senses.

Advaita: The Vedānta philosophy of Śaṃkara.

āgama-pramāṇa: Scripture as a valid means of know ledge.

āgamāsrita: Based on scripture.

ahaṃkāra: The egoic self.

akunṭhita-śakti: Unimpeded power.

aiśvarya: The power of complete dominion over all existent things.

aitiḥya: The *pramāṇa* of tradition.

ajnātārthaprakāsatva: Making known a previously un known state of affairs.

aliquid quo nihil maius cogitari posit (Latin): "That than which nothing greater can be con ceived". St. Anselm's definition of God and the *unum argumentum* of his onto logical argument for God's existence.

Āḷvārs: Twelve important Vaiṣṇava saints who lived circa 7th – 10th centuries C.E. Their collected hymns and writings are known as the *Divya Prabandham*.

amala: Imperfection.

anāhata: Unstruck sound; non-material sound.

ānanda: Spiritual bliss.

ānanta: Infinite.

anta: Culmination.

ānumāna: Inference; reasoning; rationalism.

anupalabdhi : The *pramāṇa* of non-cognition.

apauruṣeya: Eternally existent divine sound; not

man made.

a posteriori (Latin): Reaching a conclusion after percep tion.

a priori (Latin): Reaching a conclusion prior to sensory verification.

āpta: A perfectly reliable authority.

āpta-pramāṇa: Āpta as a valid means of knowledge.

āptarṣi: A perfectly reliable seer of truth.

āptavākya: Reliable utterances.

Ārhata: A follower of Jain philosophy and reli gion.

ārṣa: The *pramāṇa* of testimony by realized souls.

arthāpatti: The *pramāṇa* of implication.

aśaikṣa: Those who need no more instruction.

aṣṭānga: The eight (*aṣṭa*) limbs (*anga*) of Yoga.

ātman: The true self; consciousness; spirit; soul.

ātma-nivedana: Surrender to God.

atyantaparokṣa: Something of a completely impercept ible nature.

avaidika: Any religion or philosophical system that is not based upon the *Veda*, or *śabda-pramāṇa*.

avaiduṣya: Phenomenal knowledge.

avatāra: A divine descent of God. The earthly incarnation of God.

avayava: The constituents of inference.

avidyā: Ignorance.

avisamvāda: Trustworthy; does not belie.

Āyurveda: The Vedic medicinal system.

bādha: Logical discussion.

Baladeva Vidyābhūṣana: 18th century Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava commentator on the *Brahma-sūtras*.

Bauddha: Buddhism.

Bhagavān: The Absolute in the form of the Supreme Lord. The personal aspect of God.

Bhagavad-gītā: The "Song of God" consisting of Kṛṣṇa's teachings to Arjuna.

Bhāgavata-purāṇa: One of the eighteen major *Purāṇas* and, for Jīva Gosvāmin, the highest manifestation of *Śāstra-pramāṇa*.

bhakti: Spiritual love; devotion; devotional

meditative absorption in God; state of devotional consciousness.

bhāṣya: A commentary, especially on the *Brahma-sūtras*.

bheda: Distinction.

bhrama: The tendency to fall victim to illusion, and thus make mistakes.

Brahmā: The demi-god creator of the material world.

Brahman: The Absolute; Nārāyaṇa; God.

Brahma-sūtras: The primary philosophical text of Vedānta.

brahma-vidyā: Knowledge of the Absolute

Buddha: Founder of Buddhism; "Awakened One".

buddhi: Intellect; innate wisdom faculty.

Caitanya Mahāprabhu: The founder/*ācārya* of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *saṃpradāya* (lineage).

Cārvāka: The Indian school of radical empiric ism and atheism.

ceṣṭā: The *pramāṇa* of knowledge acquired via direct physical effort.

chala: In Vedic logic: an unfair reply.

cit:	Consciousness.
deha:	The material body.
dei gratia (Latin):	Grace of God.
deva/devī:	Masculine and feminine divinities, re spectively, who are subordinate to God (Nārāyaṇa).
dikṣā:	Spiritual initiation received from a *guru*.
Dharma:	The natural laws of the universe, which are inherent in the structure of reality. Divine Order.
Dharmakīrti:	Buddhist philosopher.
dhīmahi:	"Let us meditate upon".
dhyāna:	Meditation.
divya-kathā:	See "Sacred Story"
dravya:	Category of substance.
dṛṣṭa:	That which is "seen".
dṛṣṭānta:	In Vedic logic: the example.
dṛṣṭārtha:	Something that is apparent to the senses.
Dvaita:	"Dualism"; the Vedānta school of Madhva.

Gāyatrī-mantra: First revealed by the *ṛṣi* Viśvamitra, the *Gāyatrī-mantra* is one of most im portant *mantras* found in the Vedic literature. It is found in all four *Vedas*. The *Gāyatrī-mantra*: *Aum bhūr bhuvah svah / Tat savitūr vareṇyam / Bhārgo devasya dhīmahi / Dhiyo yo naha prachodayat aum.*

Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism: The sect attributed to Caitanya, of which Jīva Gosvāmin was the foremost philosopher.

gnothi seauton (Greek.): "Know Thyself".

Golden Age: The first age in the cycle of *yugas*. This was a much purer era during which the practice of spirituality was much easier, and civilization was based upon Dharmic principles.

Govinda-bhāṣya: Baladeva Vidyābhūṣana's 18th century Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava commentary on the *Brahma-sūtras.*

guṇa: Quality, or mode. Specifically, the three *guṇas* of *sattva* (goodness), *rajas* (passion, energy) and *tamas* (lethar gy).

guru: A teacher, especially a spiritual teach er.

hetu: Cause.

hetu-vidyā: Logic.

hetvābāsa: Specious reasoning.

indriyas: The five senses.

Īśvara: God; the Controller.

Itihāsas: Epics.

jagaddhitaiṣin: One who seeks the benefit of the world; a world-benefactor.

jagat: Matter; materiality; the world.

jahad-ajahallakṣanā: A secondary meaning that is derived by preserving one fact while abandon ing the remainder of the meaning of a specific word.

jalpa: Discursive wrangling.

jāti: A generality based upon a false analo gy.

jīva: The individual soul.

"*Jīva-bhāṣya*" Theory: Dr. Frank Morales' theory that Jīva Gosvāmin's *Ṣaḍ-saṃdarbha* may be a hidden commentary on the *Brahma-sūtras.*

Jīva Gosvāmin: (ca. 1511-1618 CE): Author of the *Ṣaḍ-saṃdarbha.*

jñāna: Knowledge; wisdom.

jñāna-kaṇḍa: The "knowledge" portion of the *śruti* literature. Also known as Vedānta.

kali-yuga: The current age of ignorance and irre ligiosity.

karma: Literally "action", "work". The equal and opposite recompenseto ry/retributive effect of all free-will ac tions of moral-content produced by unliberated souls in the material world.

Karma-kaṇḍa: The "work" portions of the *śruti* litera ture. This section deals primarily with the nature of ritual and Vedic sacrifice as a means of both material prosperity, as well as spiritual progress. Often juxtaposed to the *jñāna-kaṇḍa*, or knowledge portion, of the *Vedas*.

karaṇāpāṭava: Error arising from insufficiency of the sense organs.

kṣaṇikavāda: The absolute momentariness of every instance of realness.

Mādhyamika-kārikās: The main philosophical work of Nāgārjuna.

mahābhūtas: The five elements: fire, water, earth, wind, and ether.

Mahāvākyas: "Great Sayings" of the *Upaniṣads*.

Mahavīra (599 – 527 BCE): The primary sage of Jainism.

manas: Mind.

mānasa-pratyakṣa: Internal perception (via mind-substance).

mantra: A spiritual sound vibration variously used for recitation and/or meditation.

manvantara: The time periods linked to various Manus, or law-givers.

māyā: That which is not; illusion.

Mīmāṃsā: The Vaidika philosophical system of Vedic exegetical analysis.

mokṣa: Liberation and freedom from illusion. Spiritual emancipation from existen tial bondage.

Myth: See "Sacred Story"

Nāgārjuna (c. 150 - 250 CE): Buddhist philosopher; origi nator of *śunyavāda* theory; author of the *Mādhyamika-kārikās.*

nāmarūpa: Name and form.

Nārāyaṇa: God; the "Sustainer of All Beings"; Brahman; Bhagavān; the Absolute.

nigrahasthāna: The grounds for defeat in a philosoph ical debate.

nirguṇa: Transcending material qualities.

nirvikalpa-pratyakṣa: Indeterminate perception.

nirṇaya: A logical conclusion reached via the procedure of *adhikaraṇa*.

Nyāya: The Vaidika school of logic and epistemology.

Nyāya-bhāṣya: Commentary of Pakṣilasvāmin on the *Nyāya-sūtras*.

Nyāya-sūtras: Logic treatise written by Akṣapāda Gautama c. 200 CE.

Omnicompetent: An attribute of God designating that there is nothing that He cannot do and that He is able to deal with all matters.

Pāṇinīya: The grammatical and linguistic school of the great Sanskritist Pāṇini.

paramārtha: Real existence, which transcends the grasp of conceptuality (according to Nagārjuna).

parokṣa: Knowledge that is mediate.

pauruṣeya: Mortal; man-made.

pauruṣeya-śabda: Man-made sound.

praesentia dei (Latin): God in the present.

Prajñāpāramitā: A genre of Mahāyāna Buddhist scrip tures focusing on the subject of the

perfection of wisdom, the earliest of which (*Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra)* is traced back to at least the 1st century BCE.

prakṛti: The material principle of the Sāṃkhya school; materiality.

pramā: Valid knowledge.

pramāda: Error caused by inattentiveness on the part of the presumed recipient of knowledge.

pramāṇa: Any valid means of knowledge acquisi tion.

pramāṇabhūta: A "living *pramāṇa*". Used in reference to the Buddha.

pramāṇaphala: The result of valid cognition.

pramāṇapuruṣa: A person of authority in Buddhism.

Pramāṇavāda: The unstated tradition of South Asian philosophers who formulated theo ries concerning *pramāṇas.*

Pramāṇavārttika: The major work by the great Buddhist logician Dharmakīrti.

prāmāṇya: Validity of knowledge.

pramātṛ: The knower.

pramiti: The action of knowledge.

prameya: The proper object of knowledge.

prapatti: Self-surrender to the will and grace of God.

prasthānatraya: The three literary sources of Vedānta philosophy: *Brahma-sūtras, Upaniṣads, Bhagavad-gītā*.

pratisarga: The destruction and consequent recreation of the world.

pratītyasamutpāda: The dependent origination of all in stances of existents.

pratyakṣa: Perception (either sensory or transma terial); empiricism.

Pratyakṣavādin: An empiricist.

prayojana: The aim of the philosophical endeavor.

Primary-Meaning Interpretation: Interpreting a sacred text via its readily apparent meaning.

Purāṇas: A genre of the *smṛti śāstra* consisting of 36 large works dealing with history, philosophy, sacred story, etc.

puruṣa: Spirit, pure consciousness, in Sāṃkhya philosophy.

puruṣa pūrṇa: Supreme Person.

pūrva-pakṣa: The ideological opponent's view.

Radical Theocentrism: The theistic devotional philosophy of the Vaiṣṇava tradition.

Radical Universalism: The claim that all religions are the same.

raison d'être (French): Reason for Being.

Rajas: Passion (see: *guṇa*).

Rāmānuja (1017-1137 C.E.): Arguably the most important of the Vaiṣṇava philosophers. Rāmānuja was the author of the *Śrī Bhāṣya* commentary on the *Brahma-sūtras*, an important *ācārya* of the Śrī Vaiṣṇava tradition, and the primary proponent of the Viśiṣṭādvaita (Quali fied Non-dualism) school of Vedānta.

ratio consequentia (Latin): Consequence of reason.

Ṛg-veda: One of the four *Saṃhitās* of the *śruti* portion of the Vedic scriptures.

ṛṣi: A perfected *yogī* who has the ability to access the eternal current of Divine sound (*śabda*).

śabda: Divine sound; Divine Word; revelation.

śabda-brahman: God as sound vibration.

saccidānanda (*sat*, *cit* and *ānanda*): Unadulterated con sciousness qualified by the attributive qualities of never-ending being, cog

nizance and bliss.

Sacred Story: Stories of a divine nature involving gods, goddesses, kings, sages, super normal beings, etc. the express pur pose of which are to either record events of sacred history or to narra tively communicate mystical, philo sophical or theological concepts, eth ical principles or ideals.

sādhana: Spiritual discipline practiced in a sys tematic way under the guidance of a qualified *guru*.

Ṣaḍ-saṃdarbha: The main philosophical work of Jīva Gosvāmin.

saguṇa: Possessing attributes.

Śaiva: A devotee of Śiva.

śakti: Energy, power, goddess who personi fies power.

samādhi: A state of enstasy, in which the indi vidual undergoes the experience of standing within her true self and tast ing the bliss of her own inner spiritual reality.

sāmānya: Class concept.

sāmānyalakṣaṇa: Universals.

samavāya: Inherence.

saṃbhava: The *pramāṇa* of possible entailment.

Śaṃkara (788 CE - 820 CE): The primary philosopher of the Advaita school.

Sāṃkhya: One of the seven schools of Vaidika philosophy which posits a dualist on tology consisting of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*.

saṃpradāya: Any traditional Vedic school of thought.

saṃsāra: The cycle of birth and death.

saṃskāra: Impression left by a previous thought or action; latent tendency.

saṃśaya: The state of doubt or uncertainty.

samvṛti: Phenomenal illusory existence (accord ing to Nagārjuna).

Sapta-darśanas: The seven traditional schools of Vaidi ka philosophy.

śarīra-śarīrin: Body-Embodied; the concept that God is the "soul" of all reality.

saraṇāgati: Surrender to God.

sarga: An account of cosmology.

sarva-jñā: Knowledge of all transcendent and temporal subject matters; omniscience.

śāstṛ: An expert in the *śāstra.*

śāstra: Scripture.

śāstrakāra: Writer of treastises.

Śāstra-pramāṇa: The Vedic scriptures as a valid means of acquiring knowledge.

sat: Existence; being; goodness; eternality.

Sattva: Goodness (see: *guṇa)*.

sattvāṃśa: Existentiality.

savikalpa-pratyakṣa: Determinate perception.

savikalpa-samādhi: Determinate meditative aborption.

saviśeṣa: Personal; with form.

Sāyaṇa: Fourteenth century *Ṛg-veda* commen tator.

Secondary-Meaning Interpretation: A form of textual analysis that employs metaphorical inter pretation.

siddhānta: The proper doctrine.

śiṣya: Spiritual student; disciple.

śloka: A Sanskrit verse of scripture, especially *anuṣṭubh* meter, consisting of 4 *pādas* of 8 syllables.

smṛti:	"Remembered" sacred texts, such as the *Itihāsas* and *Purāṇas*.
Soteriological:	The study, science or means of libera tion/salvation.
śraddhā:	"Faith" in the Vaidika sense meaning objective faith based upon previous verifying experience.
śraddhā-pramāṇa:	"Faith-based"-*pramāṇa*. See **Subjective Faith Epistemology**.
Śrāvaka:	A forest dwelling ascetic, especially among Buddhists and Jainas.
Śrīdhara Svāmī:	Wrote the *Bhāvārtha-dīpikā* commen tary on the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*
Śrī Vaiṣṇava:	The religious and philosophical tradi tion of Rāmānuja and the Āḷvārs.
śruta:	That which is "heard".
śruti:	"Heard" sacred texts, such as the *Saṃhitas* and *Upaniṣads*.
śrutārthāpatti:	The assumption of a fact in order to explain what is known from scriptures.
sthita-dhī:	Steady insight.
Śuddhādvaita:	Pure Non-dualism. The Vedānta school of Vallabha.

śuddha-sattva: Pure goodness.

Subjective Faith Epistemology: Deriving knowledge primarily from belief grounded in will (as opposed to deriving knowledge from an objective perception of *śabda* proper); the epistemology of Anselm. Anselm states in the *Proslogion*, "I do not seek to understand so that I may believe, but I believe so that I may understand" (Pros., p. 154-155). See ***śraddhā-pramāṇa***.

sugata: One who has gone to enlightenment; epithet of the Buddha.

śunyatā: Emptiness.

svalakṣaṇa: Particulars.

Takkika (Pali): An early Buddhist school of logic.

Tamas: Lethargy (see: *guṇa*).

tapas: Vows of austerity.

tarka: Hypothetical arguments.

tattva: A) A philosophical Real; B) Truth; C). A true or real substance.

Tattva-saṃdarbha: The epistemological portion of Jīva Gosvāmin's main philosophical work, the *Ṣaḍ-saṃdarbha.*

Tattvavāda: Another name for Dvaita, the Vedānta

philosophy of Madhva.

tattva-vijñāna: Knowledge of truth.

Tipitaka (Pali): The "*Three Baskets*" that constitute the Buddhist scriptures.

tri-tattva: The "Three Reals". According to the Vedānta school, the three essential components of reality: a) Brahman (God), b) Jīva (individual souls), c) Jagat (materiality).

unio mystica (Latin): "Mystical union"; meditative absorp tion.

unum argumentum (Latin): A single proof demonstrating God's necessary existence.

upamāna: The *pramāṇa* of analogy.

upāsanā: The Yoga of devotional meditation.

upāya: The methodological procedure for a given end. The means.

Upaniṣads: A genre of *śruti* consisting of 108 texts dealing with Vedic philosophy and me taphysics.

Uttara-Mīmāṃsā: Alternative name for Vedānta; the "lat er" Mīmāṃsā (as opposed to the school of Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā, or "pre vious" Mīmāṃsā.

uttara-pakṣa: When a *prima facie* view is refuted in

the procedure of *adhikaraṇa*.

Vaidika: Vedic. The religion, philosophy, prac tices or followers of the *Veda*.

vaiduṣya: Noumenal, spiritual, or transcendent knowledge.

Vaikuṇṭha: The Spiritual realm. The kingdom of God. Literally: "the place free from an xiety."

Vaiṣṇava: The ancient theistic tradition of the Vaidika religion; a devotee of God, spefically in the form of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa-Kṛṣṇa.

Vaiśeṣika: One of the seven schools of Vaidika philosophy which concentrates on the analysis of the various aspects of reali ty.

vaṃśa: The genealogy of the gods and ancient *ṛṣis*.

vaṃśānucarita: The histories of the royal dynasties descending from the sun god and the moon god.

varṇavāda: The theory that states that the smallest phonetic units that can carry the meaning (phonemes, or *varṇas*) alone are real constituents of a word.

vastubalapravṛttānumāna: Inference functioning by the force of real entities.

Veda:	"Knowledge"; the *Śāstra-pramāṇa*; the scriptures of the Vaidika tradition; the four *Saṃhitas*.
Vedānta:	The culmination (*ānta*) of knowledge (*veda*). The most important of the seven schools of Vaidika philosophy.
verbum dei (Latin):	Word of God.
via positiva (Latin):	A positive path.
vipralasā:	The desire to cheat others (in addition to ourselves)
viṣaya-vākya:	A statement taken from *Śāstra-pramāṇa* and selected as a subject of investigation.
viśeṣa:	Particularity.
viśiṣṭa:	Clearly identifiable distinctions and attributes.
Viśiṣṭādvaita:	"Qualified non-dualism". The Vedāntic school of Nāthamuni, Ya munā, and Rāmānuja.
vitaṇḍā:	Irrational arguments.
Vopadeva:	Author of the *Muktāphala.* Fl. ca. 13th century C E.
Vyākaraṇa:	The Vedic school of Sanskrit grammar. One of the seven schools of Vaidika philosophy.

vyāpti: Invariable concomitance.

Vyāsa: A *ṛṣi* and *avatāra* who is responsible for compiling the Vedas, as well as the author of the *Brahma-sūtras* and the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, among many other texts.

yajña: "Sacrifice"; the ancient Vedic fire cer emony.

Yoga: "Union". One of the seven schools of Vaidika philosophy which seeks "un ion" with the Absolute via a practical system of philosophically grounded *sādhanas*, or spiritual practices.

yogaja: Transcendental mystical insight de rived from Yoga.

"yogaś citta-vṛtti nirodhaḥ": "Yoga is the restriction of the modifications of the mind" (*Yoga-sūtras*, 1:2)

About the Author

Sri Dharma Pravartaka Acharya (Dr. Frank Morales, Ph.D.) began his personal spiritual journey over 36 years ago at the tender age of ten when he read the *Bhagavad Gita* for the very first time. He then coupled his decades of intense spiritual practice and study with advanced academic achievements, earning a B.A. in philosophy/theology from Loyola University Chicago, as well as an M.A. and Ph.D. in religious studies from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Explaining to his doctoral advisor that "I don't want to just study the history of religion, I want to make religious history", Sri Acharyaji eventually left academia to devote himself exclusively to spiritual teaching and to the preservation of the great tradition of Sanatana Dharma (Hinduism).

Today, Sri Acharyaji is universally acclaimed as one of the world's most respected and qualified Dharma teachers, Vedic scholars and Hindu spiritual leaders. Dr. Deepak Chopra has exclaimed in 2002: "You've done truly phenomenal work teaching the pure essence of Yoga". In a similar manner, Dr. David Frawley has said about Sri Acharyaji, "Dr. Frank Morales represents the Sankalpa [the will] of the Hindu people and the cause of Sanatana Dharma. I urge all Hindus everywhere to give him your full support, assistance, and encouragement in his crucial work. He needs and deserves our help."

Sri Acharyaji was the Resident Acharya (Spiritual Preceptor) of the Hindu Temple of Nebraska (2007 - 2009), which represents the first time in American history that a Hindu temple has ever made such an esteemed appointment.

Sri Acharyaji currently occupies his full time teaching Dharma spirituality to a diverse and rapidly growing audience. In addition to leading classes, satsanghas, seminars and lecturing on Sanatana Dharma widely, Sri Acharyaji is a renowned author, as well as a personal spiritual guide (*guru*) to a rapidly increasing following of enthusiastic students from both the Indian and the non-Indian communities.

He is the President-Acharya of the International Sanatana Dharma Society, and the Director of the Center for Dharma Studies in Omaha, Nebraska, USA.

Some of his books include:

Sanatana Dharma: The Eternal Natural Way

Living Dharma: The Teachings of Sri Dharma Pravartaka Acharya

Radical Universalism: Does Hinduism Teach that All Religions are the Same?

Taking Refuge in Dharma: The Initiation Guidebook

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The Shakti Principle: Encountering the Feminine Power of God

The Art of Wisdom: Affirmations for Boundless Living

The Dictionary of Sanatana Dharma

For more information about the life and teachings of Sri

Dharma Pravartaka Acharya, please visit his website: www.dharmacentral.com